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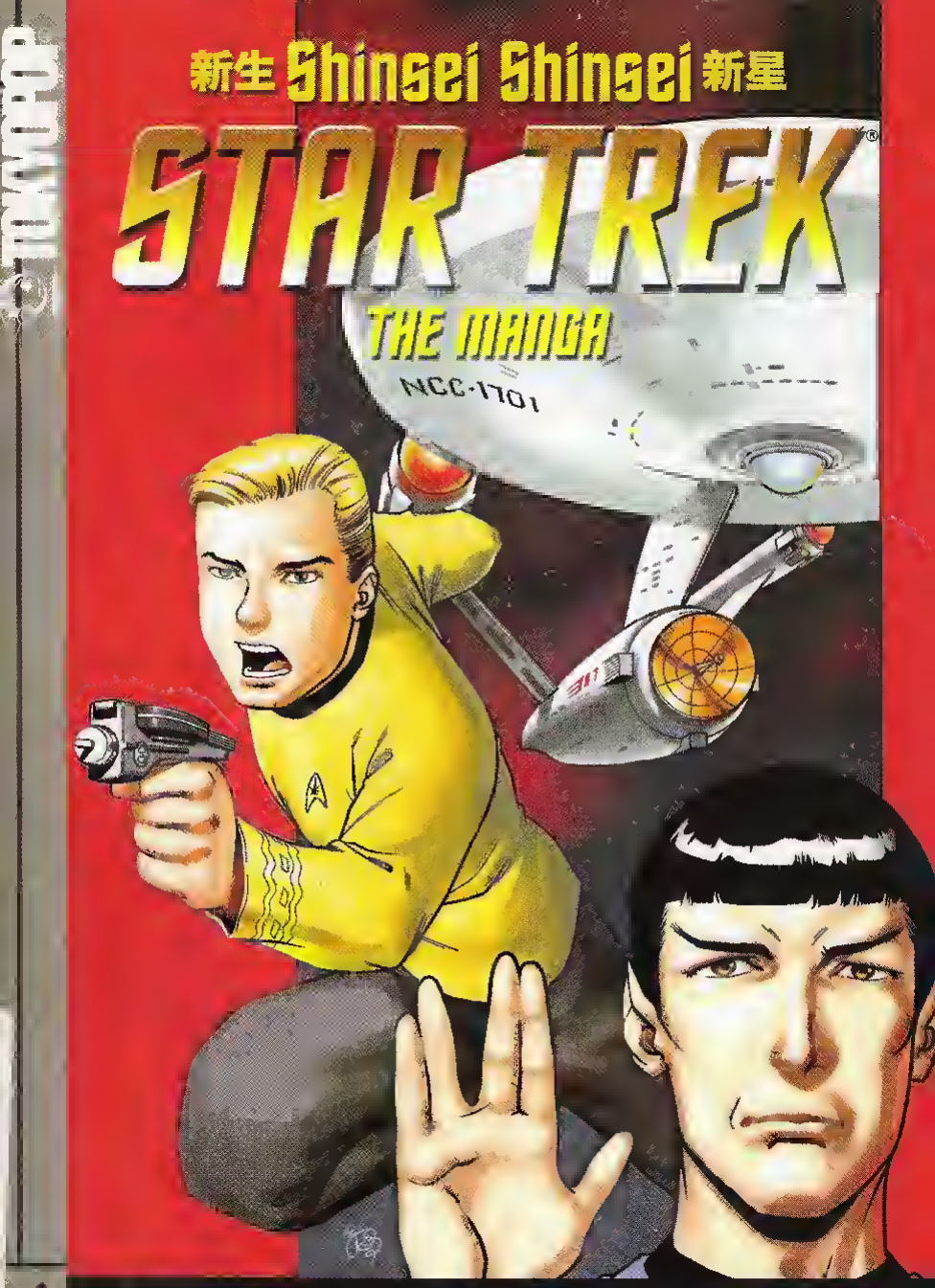

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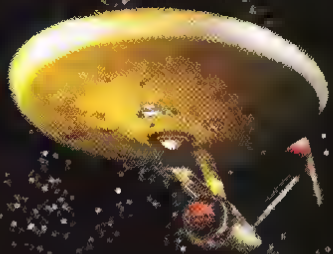

SIDE EFFECTS
Story by Chris Dows
Art by Makoto Nakatsuka

DSAN
Story by Jim Alexander
Art by Michael Shelfer

'TIL DEATH
Story by Miko W. Barr
Art by Joong Mo Yang

ORPHANS
Story by Rob Tokar
Art by EJ Su

ANYTHING BUT ALONE
Story by Joshua Ortega
Art by Gregory Giovanni Johnson

THE MANGA REVOLUTION · LEADING · 漫画革命

Exclusive Limited Edition Cover 1 of 2

SCI-FI

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ISBN 1427800316
50999
9 781427 800312
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YGN
SHINSEI
Shinsei, Shinsei.
Star trek /

Star Trek: the manga
Shinsei/Shinsei

Toning (Orphans) - Hon Lam Chow
Lettering - Lucas Rivera
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ISBN: 1-59816-744-8
1-4278-0030-8 (Convention Exclusive)
1-4278-0031-6 (Diamond Exclusive)

First TOKYOPOP printing: September 2006

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the USA

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HAMBURG // LONDON // LOS ANGELES // TOKYO

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Henry Billings Library
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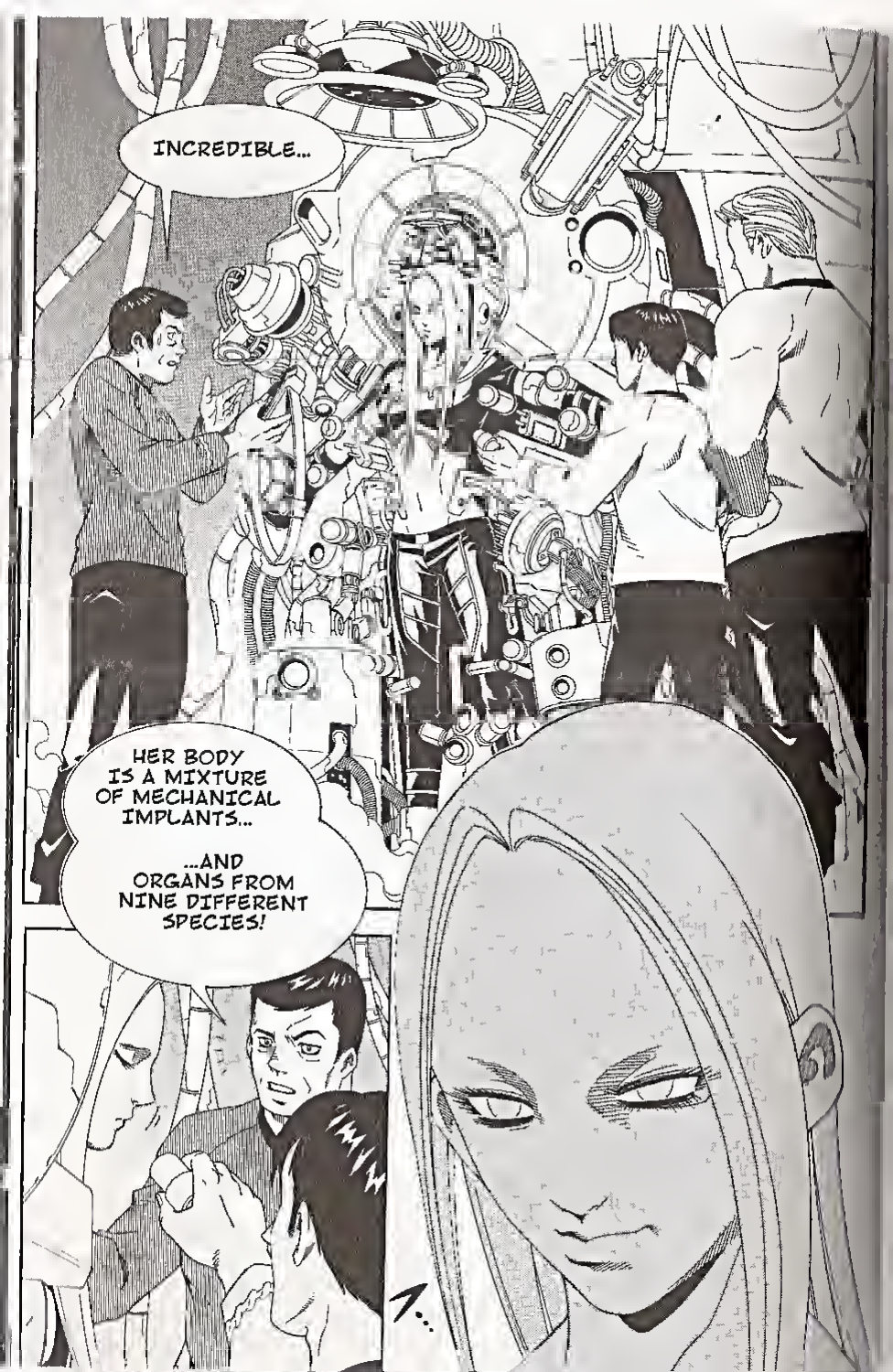
Side Effects

Story by Chris Dows
Art by Makoto Nakatsuka

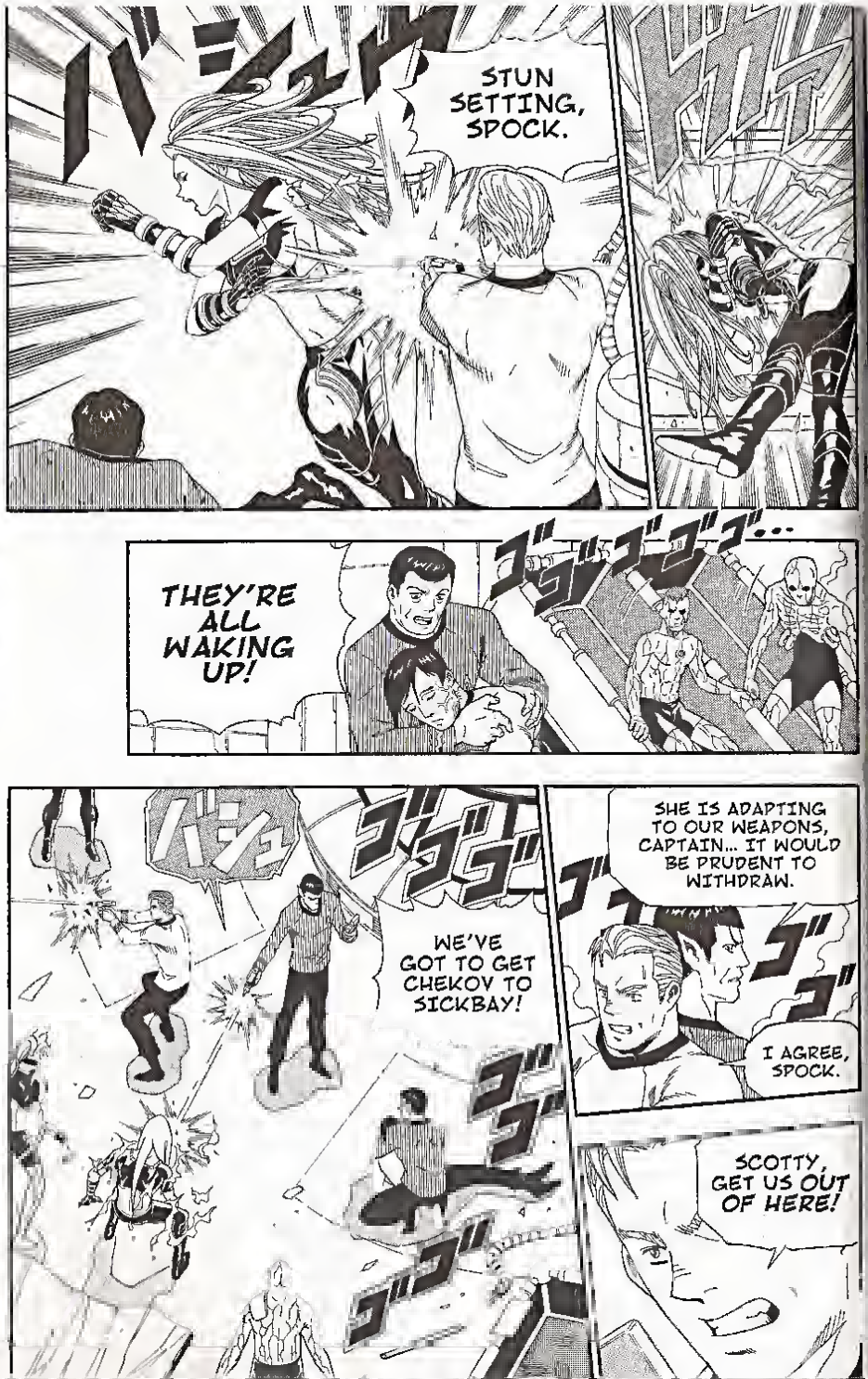
CAPTAIN'S LOG.
STARDATE
[illegible]
HAVING DETECTED A BADLY DAMAGED ALIEN VESSEL, A LANDING PARTY CONSISTING OF MYSELF, SCIENCE OFFICER SPOCK, DOCTOR MCCOY AND ENSIGN CHEKOV IS INVESTIGATING DISTURBING SENSOR READINGS.
SPOCK WASN'T KIDDING WHEN HE SAID THE LIFE-SIGNS WERE CONFUSING. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS, JIM.

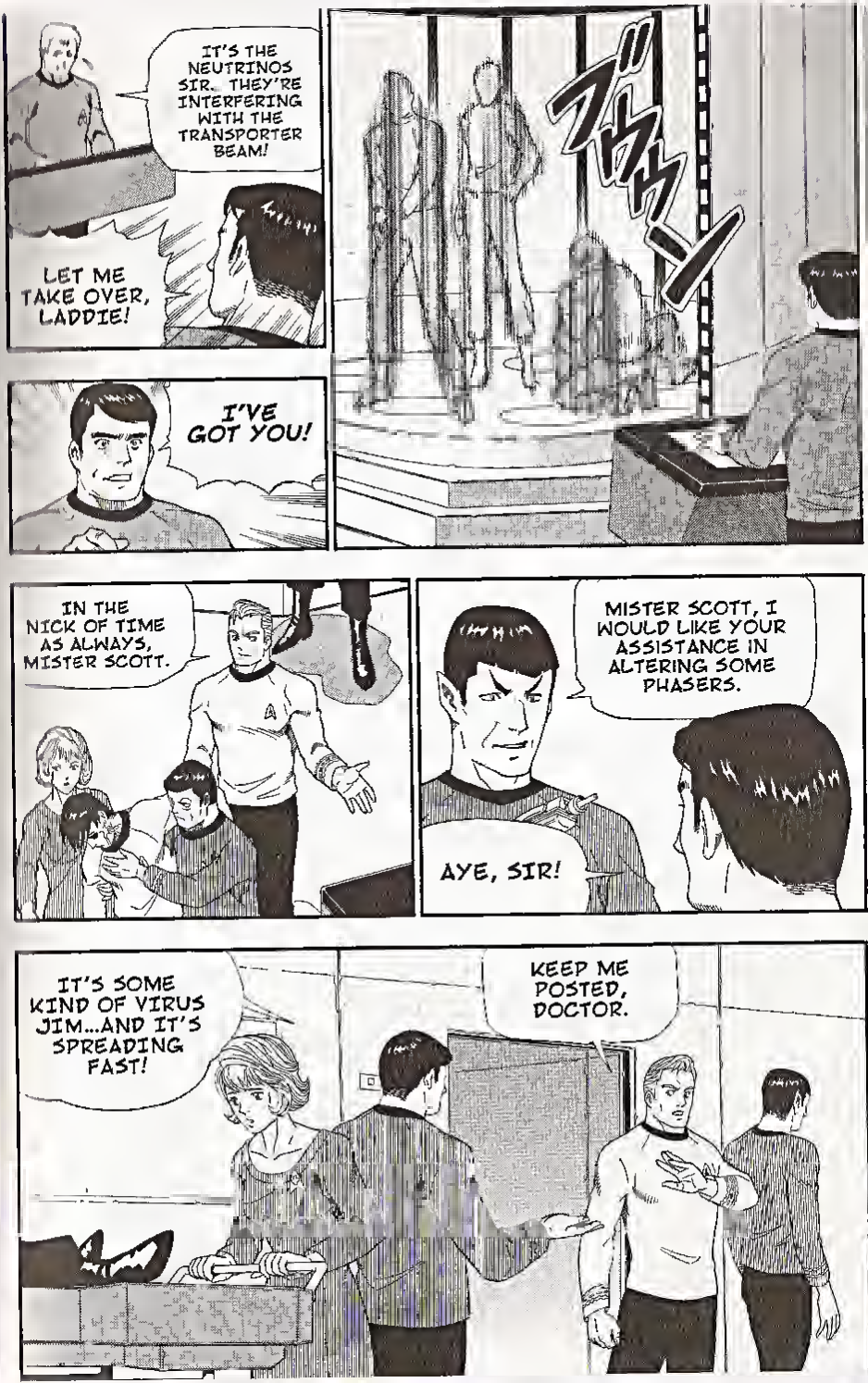
THEY'RE ALL THE SAME RACE BUT HAVE COMBINATIONS OF OTHER SPECIES SPLICED INTO THEM. THIS ONE ALONE HAS TRACES OF HUMAN AND ROMULAN DNA...AND THERE'S HUNDREDS MORE.
THIS POOR CREATURE'S HAD CYBERNETIC IMPLANTS GRAFTED ONTO HIS NERVOUS SYSTEM. HE MUST HAVE DIED IN AGONY!
DEAR LORD...
CAPTAIN...
THE SHIP'S RECORDS ARE BADLY DAMAGED, BUT IT APPEARS THIS VESSEL WAS LAUNCHED OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.
HOW HAS IT MANAGED TO KEEP TOGETHER SO LONG?
IT HAS A SOPHISTICATED AUTOMATIC REPAIR SYSTEM, CAPTAIN. EVIDENTLY, IT HAS FAILED.
TWO HUNDRED YEARS... THESE POOR SOULS ARE SEMI-CONSCIOUS, JIM.
THEY'RE BEING KEPT ALIVE BY FEEDING TUBES AND CIRCUITRY. THEIR SUFFERING HAS TO STOP!
ENTERPRISE TO CAPTAIN KIRK.

KIRK HERE. GO AHEAD, SCOTTY.
WE'VE GOT ELEVATED NEUTRINO ACTIVITY CLOSE BY, SIR. THERE'S SOME KIND OF WORMHOLE OPENING.
ゴゴゴゴゴ。
DEEP
!
SCOTTY, GO TO YELLOW ALERT AND STAND BY TO BEAM US ABOARD...
JIM! LOOK AT THIS!
WHAT IS IT, BONES?
OH MY GOD!


INCREDIBLE...
HER BODY IS A MIXTURE OF MECHANICAL IMPLANTS...
...AND ORGANS FROM NINE DIFFERENT SPECIES!

ガシィ
GAACHHH
ドスッ
CHHKOV!
BONES!
GET DOWN!


バシュッ
STUN SETTING, SPOCK.
ビカッ
THEY'RE ALL WAKING UP!
ゴゴゴゴゴ...
バシュ
ゴゴゴ
WE'VE GOT TO GET CHEKOV TO SICKBAY!
ゴゴ
ゴゴ
SHE IS ADAPTING TO OUR WEAPONS, CAPTAIN... IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO WITHDRAW.
ゴゴ
I AGREE, SPOCK.
SCOTTY, GET US OUT OF HERE!


IT'S THE NEUTRINOS SIR. THEY'RE INTERFERING WITH THE TRANSPORTER BEAM!
LET ME TAKE OVER, LADDIE!
ブウン
I'VE GOT YOU!
IN THE NICK OF TIME AS ALWAYS, MISTER SCOTT.
MISTER SCOTT, I WOULD LIKE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN ALTERING SOME PHASERS.
AYE, SIR!
IT'S SOME KIND OF VIRUS JIM...AND IT'S SPREADING FAST!
KEEP ME POSTED, DOCTOR.

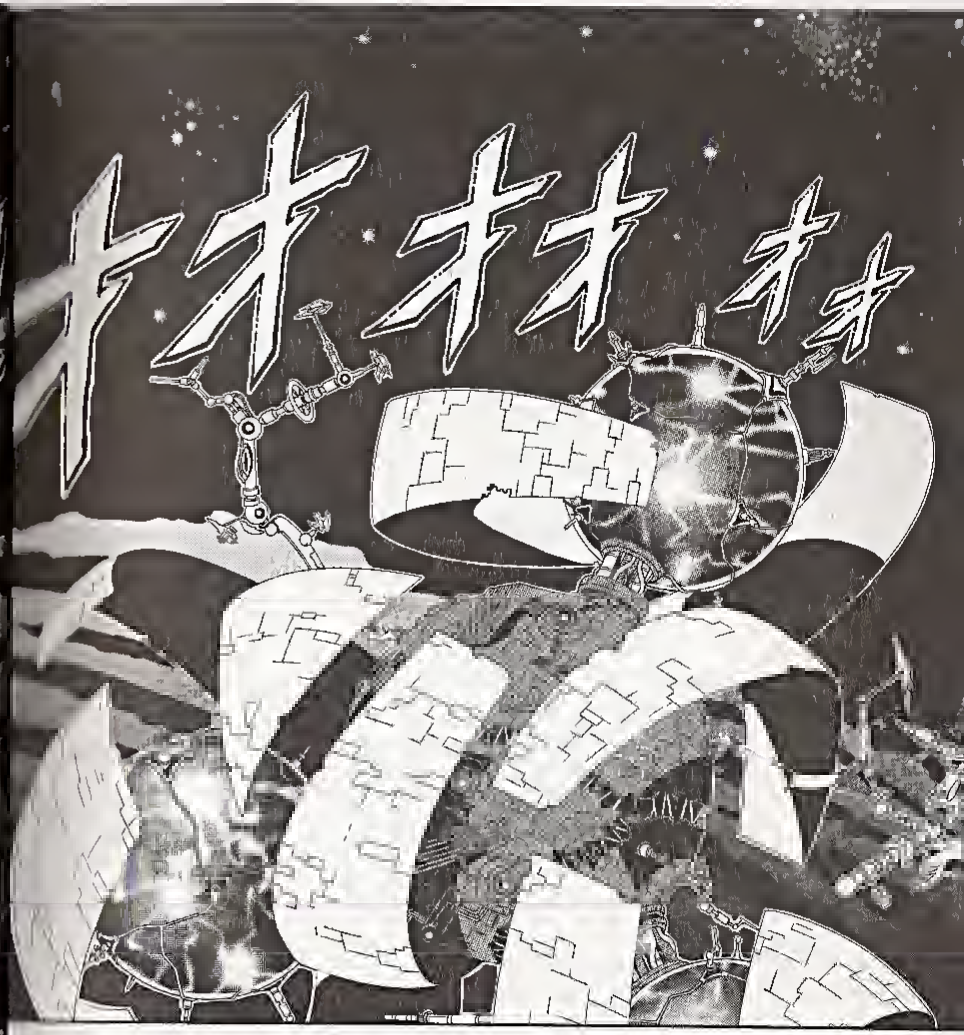
REPORT!
ALL FREQUENCIES ARE BEING BLOCKED, CAPTAIN... I CANNOT CONTACT STARFLEET COMMAND!
IS IT INTERFERENCE FROM THE WORM-HOLE, SPOCK?
NEGATIVE, CAPTAIN UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, COMMUNI-CATIONS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED. SOMETHING— OR SOMEONE IS JAMMING OUR SIGNALS
CAPTAIN!

COULD THAT BE THEM, MR. SPOCK?

ゴオオオオオ
SHIELDS UP! RED ALERT!
バシュ
バシュ
バシュ
CAPTAIN... A NUMBER OF SATELLITE VESSELS ARE TAKING POSITION AROUND US.
CAPTAIN WE'RE STOP-UUUUUGH!
ガク!

IT'S A HIGH ENERGY CONTAINMENT FIELD. WE CANNOT MATCH ITS POWER.
CAPTAIN.. SYSTEMS ARE OVER-LOADING THROUGHOUT THE SHIP.
THE ENGINES CANNA TAKE THE STRAIN! I'VE GOTTA SHUT THEM DOWN!
DO IT, SCOTTY. UHURA, PATCH ME THROUGH TO THE SHIP.
ALL HANDS, THIS IS THE CAPTAIN.
SECURE STATIONS!
WE'RE BEING PULLED THROUGH THE WORMHOLE, CAPTAIN.

ゴオオオオオ
SENSORS ARE OFF-LINE. MINOR DAMAGE ON DECKS EIGHT AND NINE.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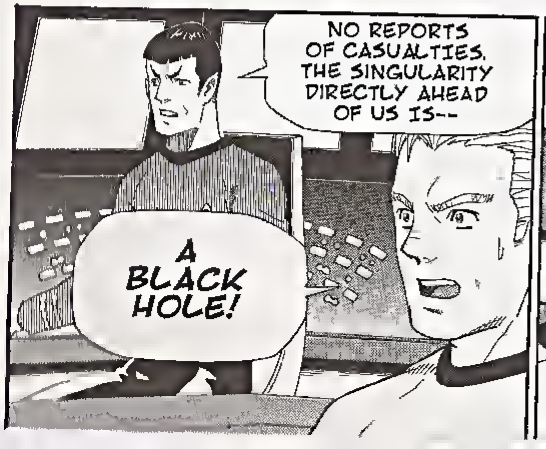
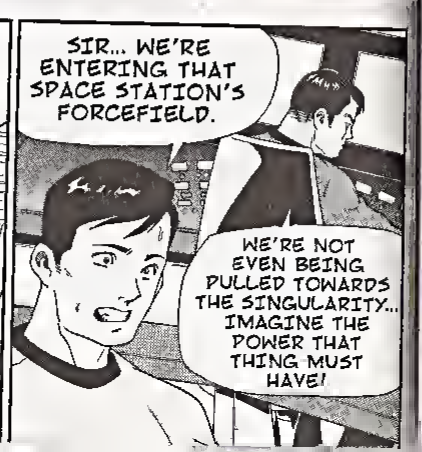
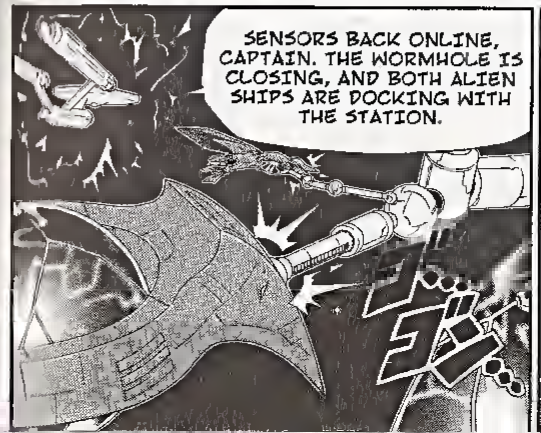

NO REPORTS OF CASUALTIES. THE SINGULARITY DIRECTLY AHEAD OF US IS--
A BLACK HOLE!


SIR... WE'RE ENTERING THAT SPACE STATION'S FORCEFIELD.
WE'RE NOT EVEN BEING PULLED TOWARDS THE SINGULARITY... IMAGINE THE POWER THAT THING MUST HAVE!

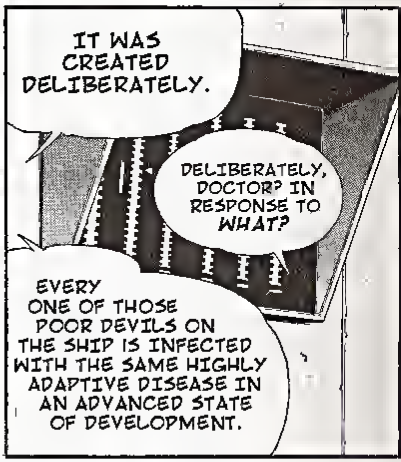

SENSORS BACK ONLINE, CAPTAIN. THE WORMHOLE IS CLOSING, AND BOTH ALIEN SHIPS ARE DOCKING WITH THE STATION.
ゴゴ

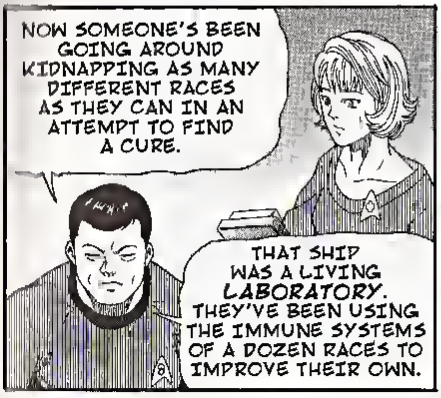
CAN WE BREAK FREE OF THE SATELLITES, SPOCK?
PERHAPS, BUT THE PROBABILITY OF US PENETRATING THE STATION'S SHIELDING IS LOW. FURTHERMORE, READINGS INDICATE THAT WE ARE IN AN UNKNOWN PART OF SPACE.

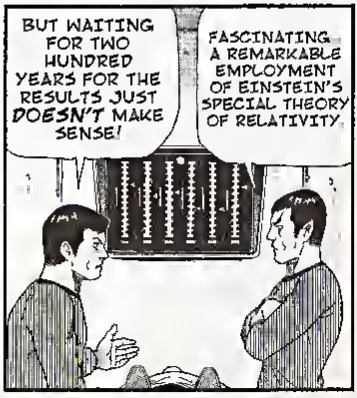
SO WE CAN'T GO FORWARDS AND WE CAN'T GO BACKWARDS_UHURA, TRY HAILING THE STATION. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET AN ANSWER TO WHY THEY BROUGHT US HERE.
AYE, CAPTAIN.
MISTER SULU...SEE IF YOU CAN WORK OUT WHERE WE ARE. SCOTTY--SEND REPAIR TEAMS DOWN TO THE DAMAGED DECKS. IF WE GET THE CHANCE TO RUN, I WANT TO RUN AS FAST AS WE CAN.
YES, SIR.
CAPTAIN..
I COUNT OVER ONE HUNDRED VESSELS OF VARYING ORIGIN BEING HELD WITH SIMILAR RESTRAINTS. SOME ARE OVER THREE THOUSAND YEARS OLD...BUT THE STATION IS NO MORE THAN FIFTY.
WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS SPOCK?
I'M NOT SURE, CAPTAIN. THOSE SHIPS I CAN IDENTIFY MATCH THE RACIAL MIXES FOUND ON THE DAMAGED ALIEN VESSEL.
BUT THE TIME DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE STATION AND THE SHIPS IS A MOST STIMULATING CONUNDRUM
CAPTAIN KIRK...AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM DOCTOR MCCOY.
HE NEEDS TO SEE YOU AND MISTER SPOCK IN SICKBAY *IMMEDIATELY.*

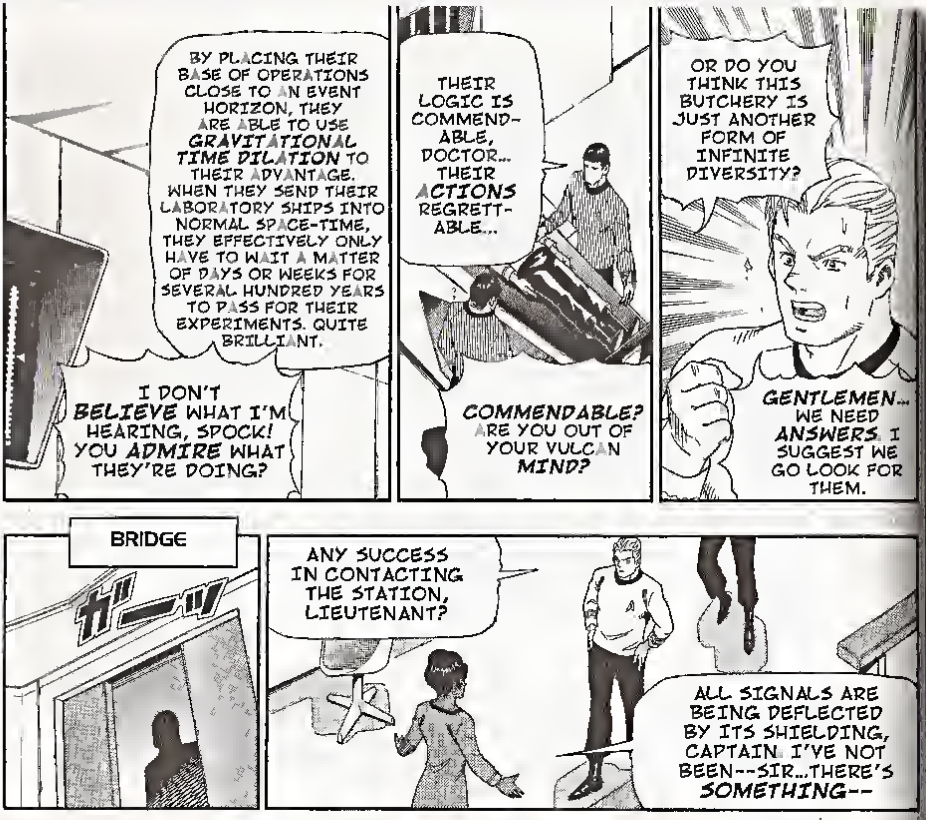
CHEKOV'S *DYING*, JIM. AND THERE'S NOT A DAMNED THING I CAN DO TO *STOP* IT.
WHAT'S DOING THIS TO HIM, BONES?

NEAR AS I CAN TELL, IT'S SOME FORM OF ACCELERATED ANTIGEN. I KNOW ONE THING FOR SURE...

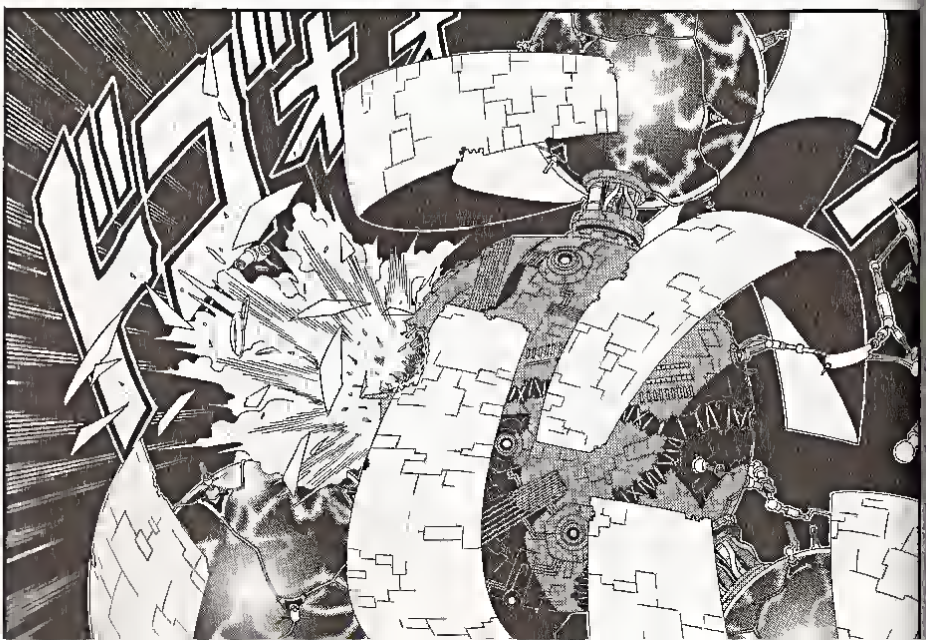

IT WAS CREATED DELIBERATELY.
DELIBERATELY, DOCTOR? IN RESPONSE TO *WHAT?*
EVERY ONE OF THOSE POOR DEVILS ON THE SHIP IS INFECTED WITH THE SAME HIGHLY ADAPTIVE DISEASE IN AN ADVANCED STATE OF DEVELOPMENT.


NOW SOMEONE'S BEEN GOING AROUND KIDNAPPING AS MANY DIFFERENT RACES AS THEY CAN IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND A CURE.
THAT SHIP WAS A LIVING *LABORATORY*. THEY'VE BEEN USING THE IMMUNE SYSTEMS OF A DOZEN RACES TO IMPROVE THEIR OWN.


BUT WAITING FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS FOR THE RESULTS JUST *DOESN'T* MAKE SENSE!
FASCINATING A REMARKABLE EMPLOYMENT OF EINSTEIN'S SPECIAL THEORY OF RELATIVITY


BY PLACING THEIR BASE OF OPERATIONS CLOSE TO AN EVENT HORIZON, THEY ARE ABLE TO USE GRAVITATIONAL TIME DILATION TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. WHEN THEY SEND THEIR LABORATORY SHIPS INTO NORMAL SPACE-TIME, THEY EFFECTIVELY ONLY HAVE TO WAIT A MATTER OF DAYS OR WEEKS FOR SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS TO PASS FOR THEIR EXPERIMENTS. QUITE BRILLIANT.
I DON'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M HEARING, SPOCK! YOU ADMIRE WHAT THEY'RE DOING?
THEIR LOGIC IS COMMEND-ABLE, DOCTOR... THEIR ACTIONS REGRETT-ABLE...
COMMENDABLE? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR VULCAN MIND?
OR DO YOU THINK THIS BUTCHERY IS JUST ANOTHER FORM OF INFINITE DIVERSITY?
GENTLEMEN... WE NEED ANSWERS. I SUGGEST WE GO LOOK FOR THEM.

BRIDGE
ガーッ!
ANY SUCCESS IN CONTACTING THE STATION, LIEUTENANT?
ALL SIGNALS ARE BEING DEFLECTED BY ITS SHIELDING, CAPTAIN. I'VE NOT BEEN--SIR...THERE'S SOMETHING--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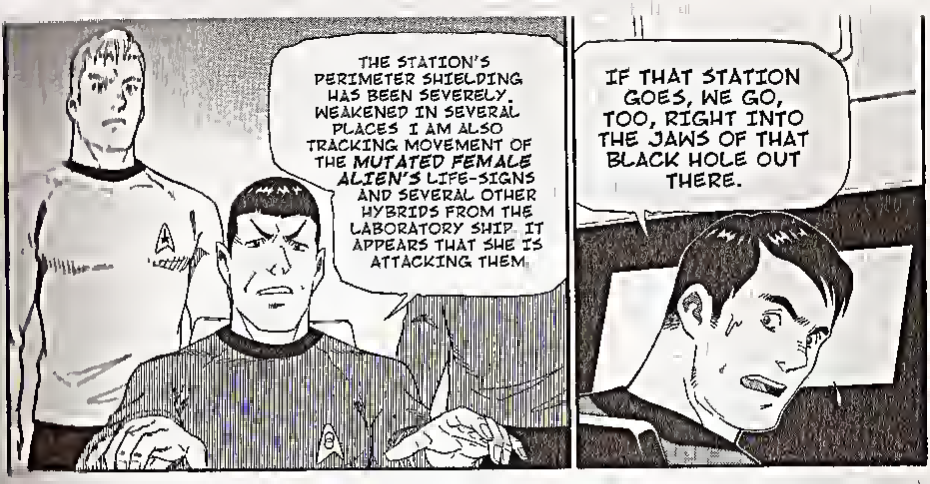
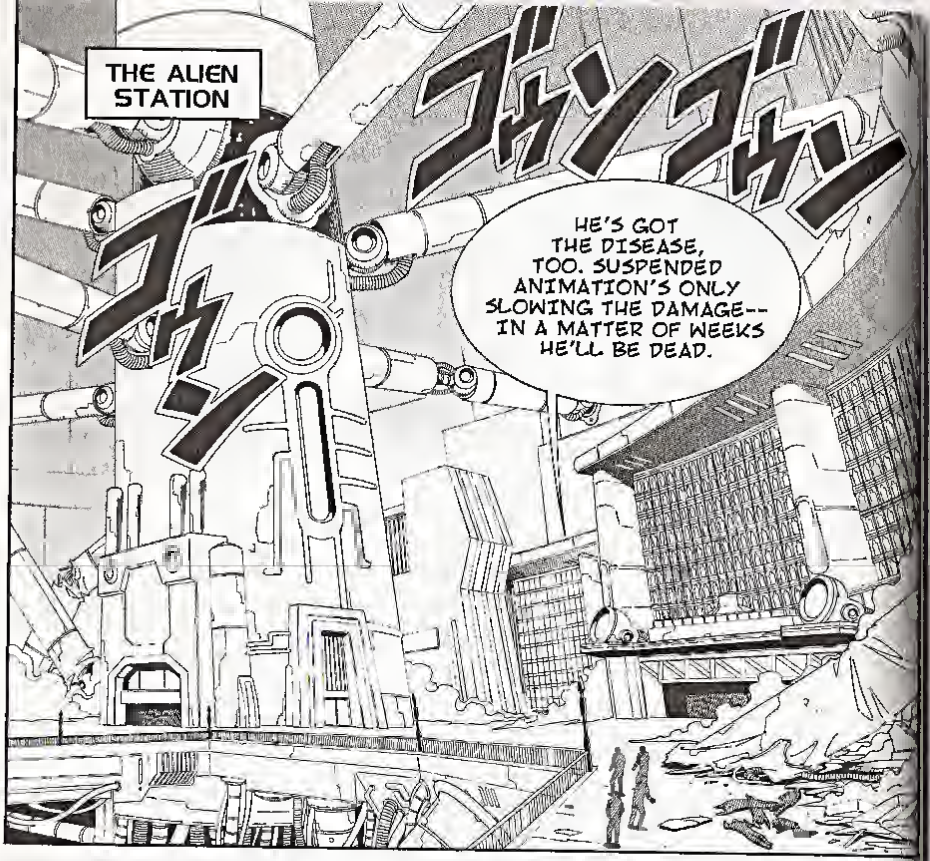

THE STATION'S PERIMETER SHIELDING HAS BEEN SEVERELY WEAKENED IN SEVERAL PLACES I AM ALSO TRACKING MOVEMENT OF THE MUTATED FEMALE ALIEN'S LIFE-SIGNS AND SEVERAL OTHER HYBRIDS FROM THE LABORATORY SHIP. IT APPEARS THAT SHE IS ATTACKING THEM.
IF THAT STATION GOES, WE GO, TOO, RIGHT INTO THE JAWS OF THAT BLACK HOLE OUT THERE.

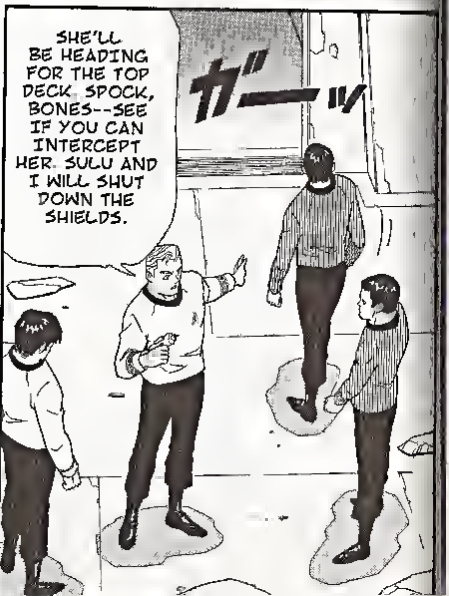
JIM...SHE'S SPECIAL. THE READINGS I TOOK BEFORE WE LEFT SHOWED HER COMBINATION OF PHYSIOLOGY AND IMPLANTS TO BE UNIQUE. SHE COULD BE THE ONLY HOPE FOR HER RACE... AND CHEKOV.
UNDERSTOOD, DOCTOR. IT LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE TO GO STOP HER BEFORE SHE TEARS EVERYTHING APART.

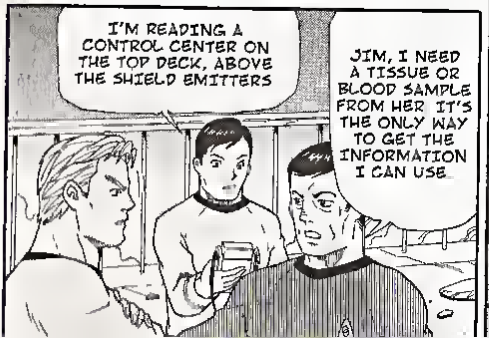
IT WOULD BE ILLOGICAL FOR HER TO DESTROY THE STATION WHEN IT WOULD INVARIABLY LEAD TO HER OWN DEATH.
MAYBE SHE'S NOT WORKING FROM LOGIC, SPOCK. MAYBE SHE WANTS REVENGE.

IS THERE A BIG ENOUGH GAP IN THE SHIELD FOR US TO BEAM THROUGH, SCOTTY?
I CAN GET YOU IN SIR...BUT I CANNA GUARANTEE I'LL GET YOU OUT!
I'LL TRUST YOU TO FIGURE IT OUT. ARE THE PHASERS READY?
AYE, SIR, BUT WITH THE ADJUSTMENTS MR. SPOCK ASKED FOR, THE POWER PACKS WON'T LAST HALF AS LONG AS THEY NORMALLY WOULD.

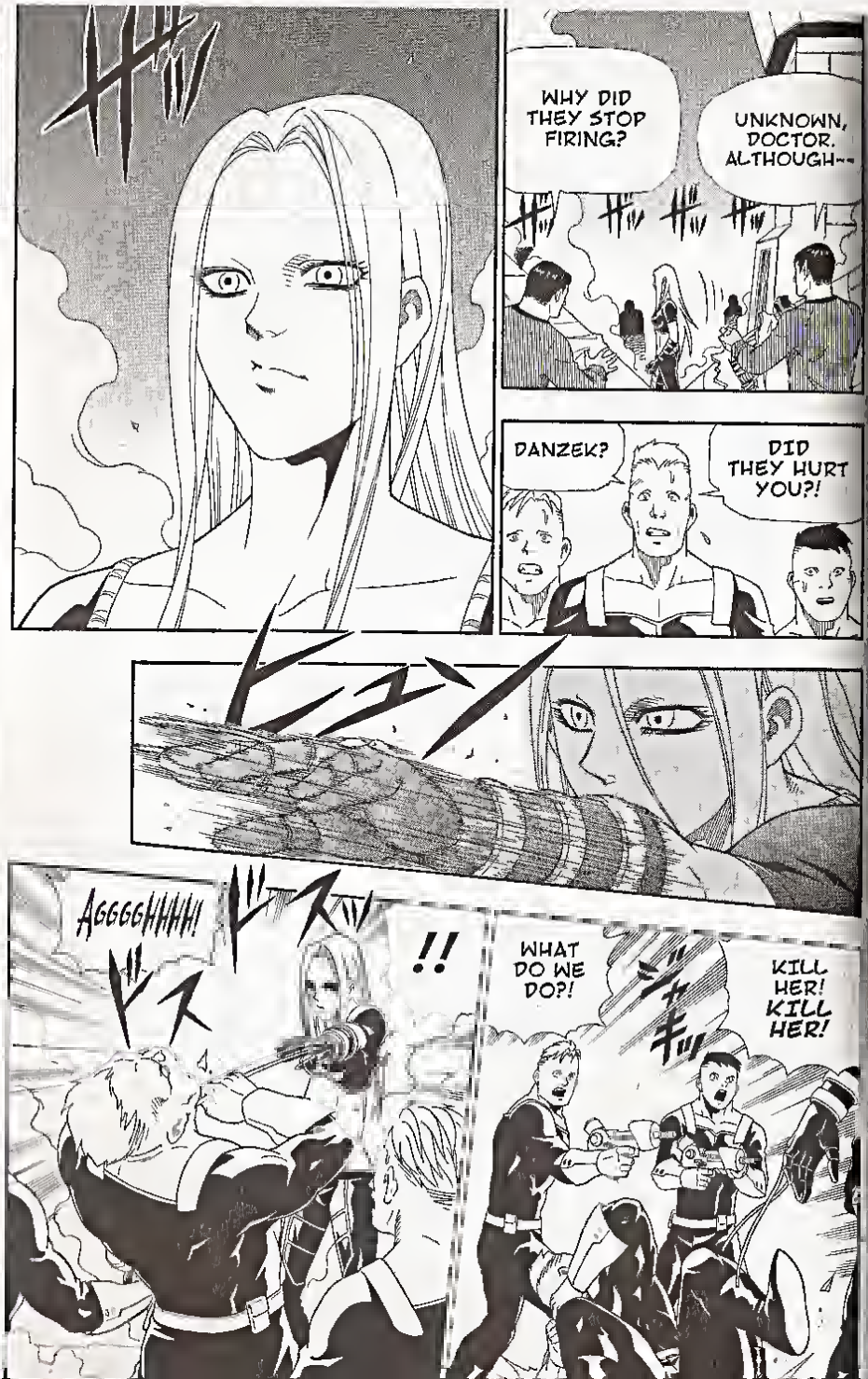

THE ALIEN STATION
ゴゥンゴゥン
ゴゥン
HE'S GOT THE DISEASE, TOO. SUSPENDED ANIMATION'S ONLY SLOWING THE DAMAGE-- IN A MATTER OF WEEKS HE'LL BE DEAD.

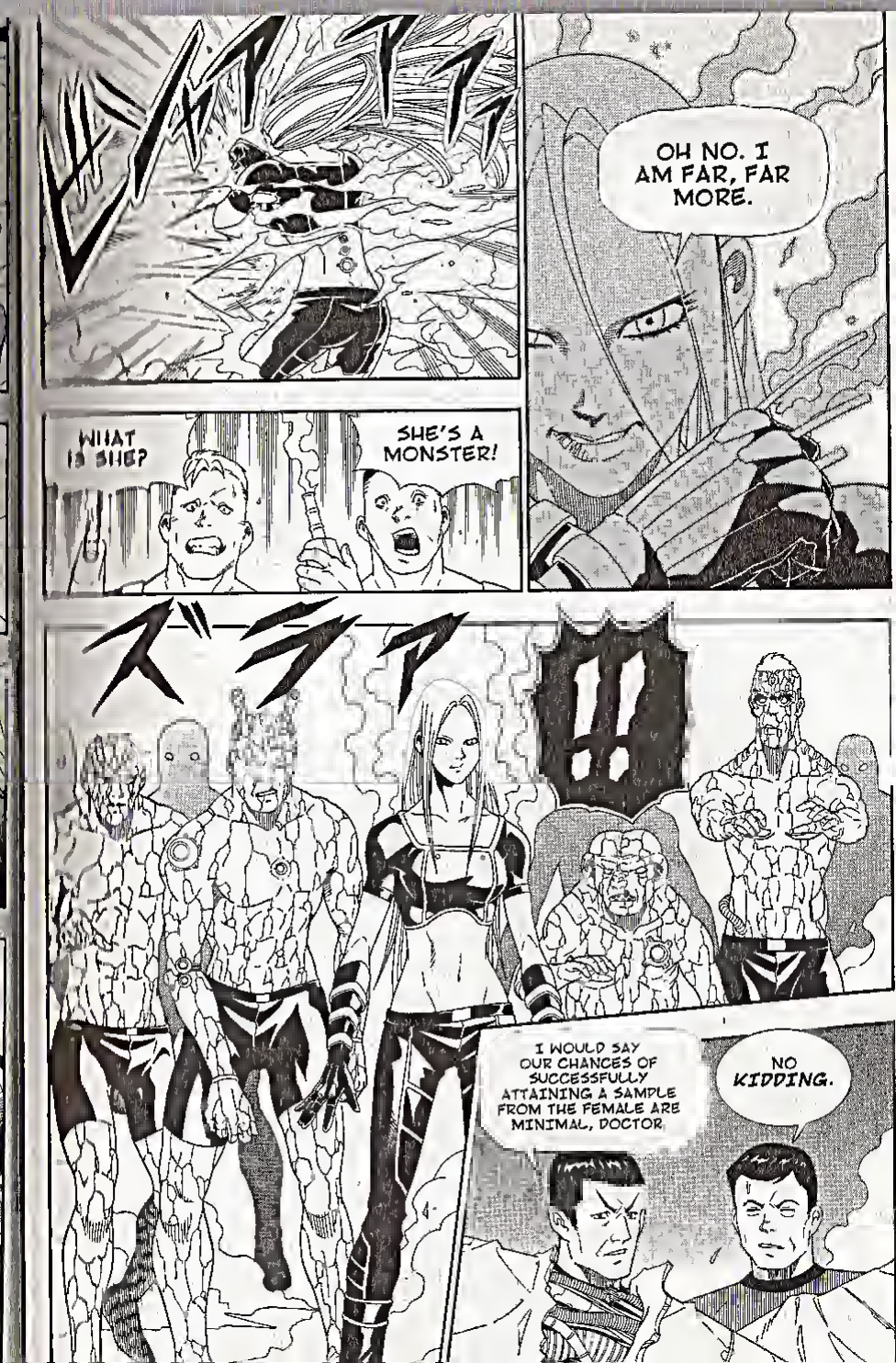
SIXTY-TWO THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED AND FOUR SIMILAR UNITS IN THIS SECTION ALONE, CAPTAIN. MOSTLY EMPTY.

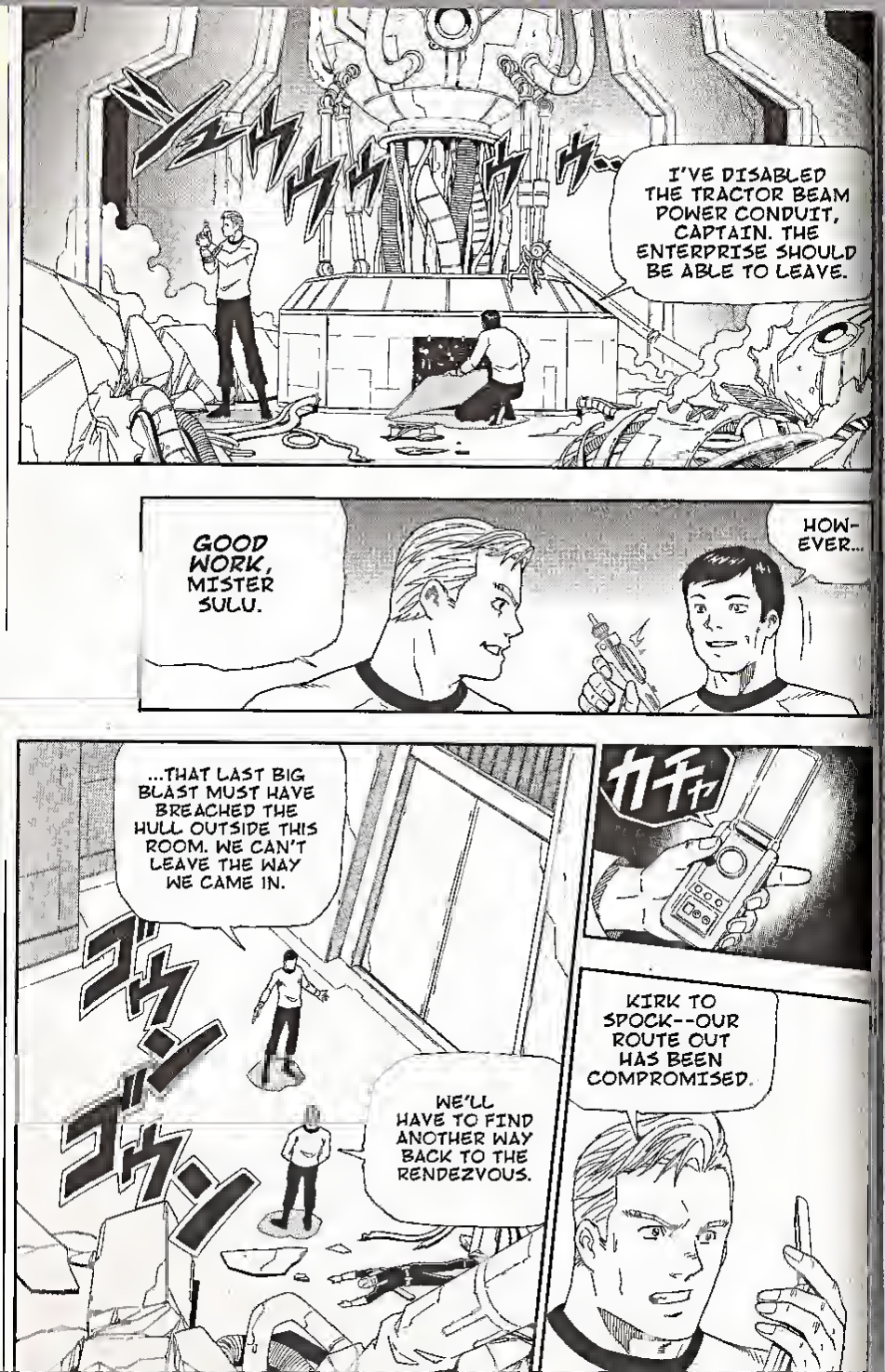

SHE'LL BE HEADING FOR THE TOP DECK. SPOCK, BONES--SEE IF YOU CAN INTERCEPT HER. SULU AND I WILL SHUT DOWN THE SHIELDS.
ガーッ


I'M READING A CONTROL CENTER ON THE TOP DECK, ABOVE THE SHIELD EMITTERS
JIM, I NEED A TISSUE OR BLOOD SAMPLE FROM HER. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET THE INFORMATION I CAN USE.

ブーン
AGGGGGHHHHH!
LET'S BE CAREFUL, SPOCK. THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT THESE--
ガガガガ
FIRE!
CUT THEM DOWN!
?!


WHY DID THEY STOP FIRING?
UNKNOWN, DOCTOR. ALTHOUGH--
DANZEK?
DID THEY HURT YOU?!
AGGGGHHHH!
!!
WHAT DO WE DO?!
KILL HER! KILL HER!


OH NO. I AM FAR, FAR MORE.
WHAT IS SHE?
SHE'S A MONSTER!
!!
I WOULD SAY OUR CHANCES OF SUCCESSFULLY ATTAINING A SAMPLE FROM THE FEMALE ARE MINIMAL, DOCTOR.
NO KIDDING.

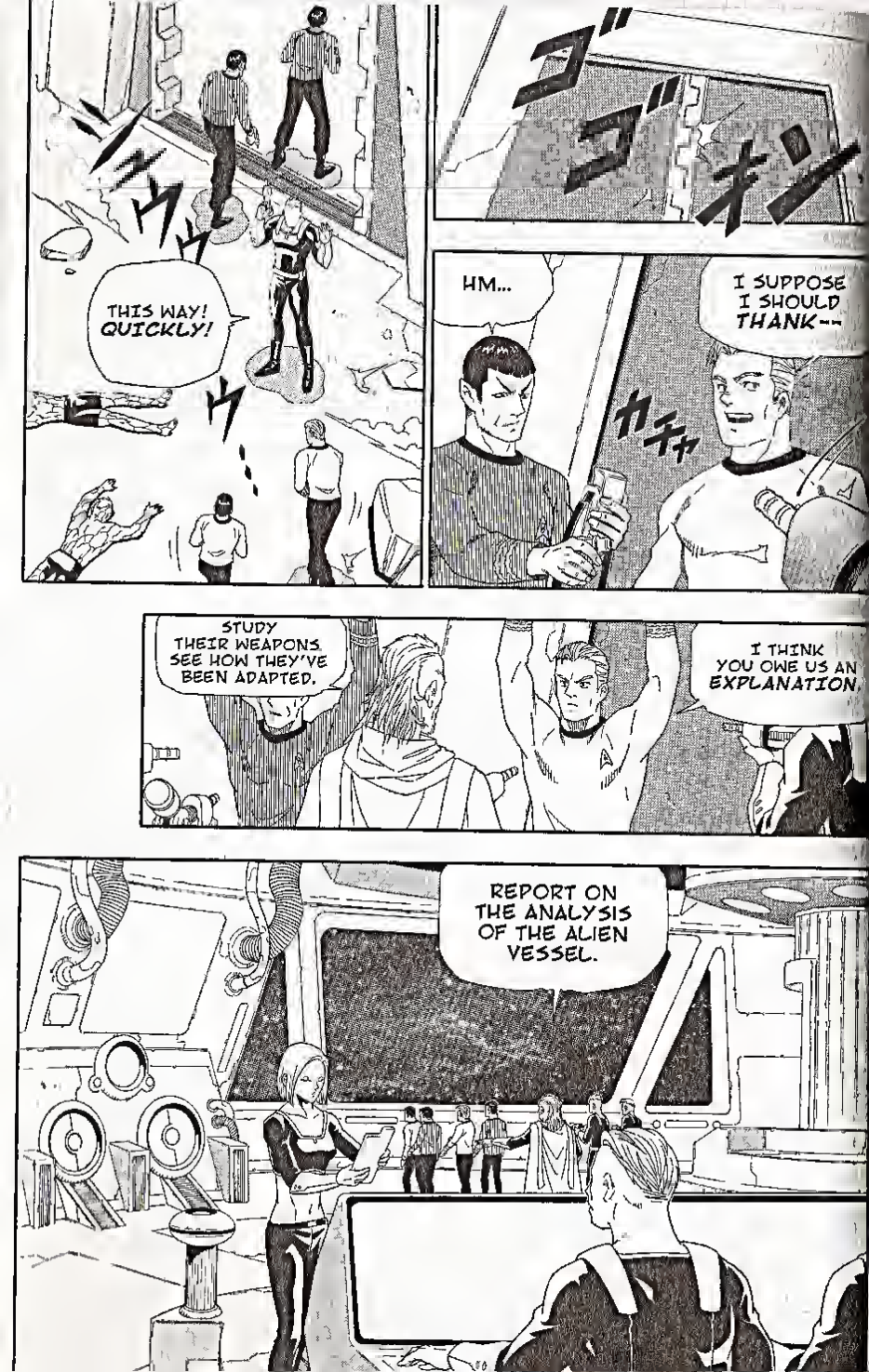

I'VE DISABLED THE TRACTOR BEAM POWER CONDUIT, CAPTAIN. THE ENTERPRISE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEAVE.
GOOD WORK, MISTER SULU.
HOW-EVER...
...THAT LAST BIG BLAST MUST HAVE BREACHED THE HULL OUTSIDE THIS ROOM. WE CAN'T LEAVE THE WAY WE CAME IN.
WE'LL HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY BACK TO THE RENDEZVOUS.
KIRK TO SPOCK--OUR ROUTE OUT HAS BEEN COMPROMISED.

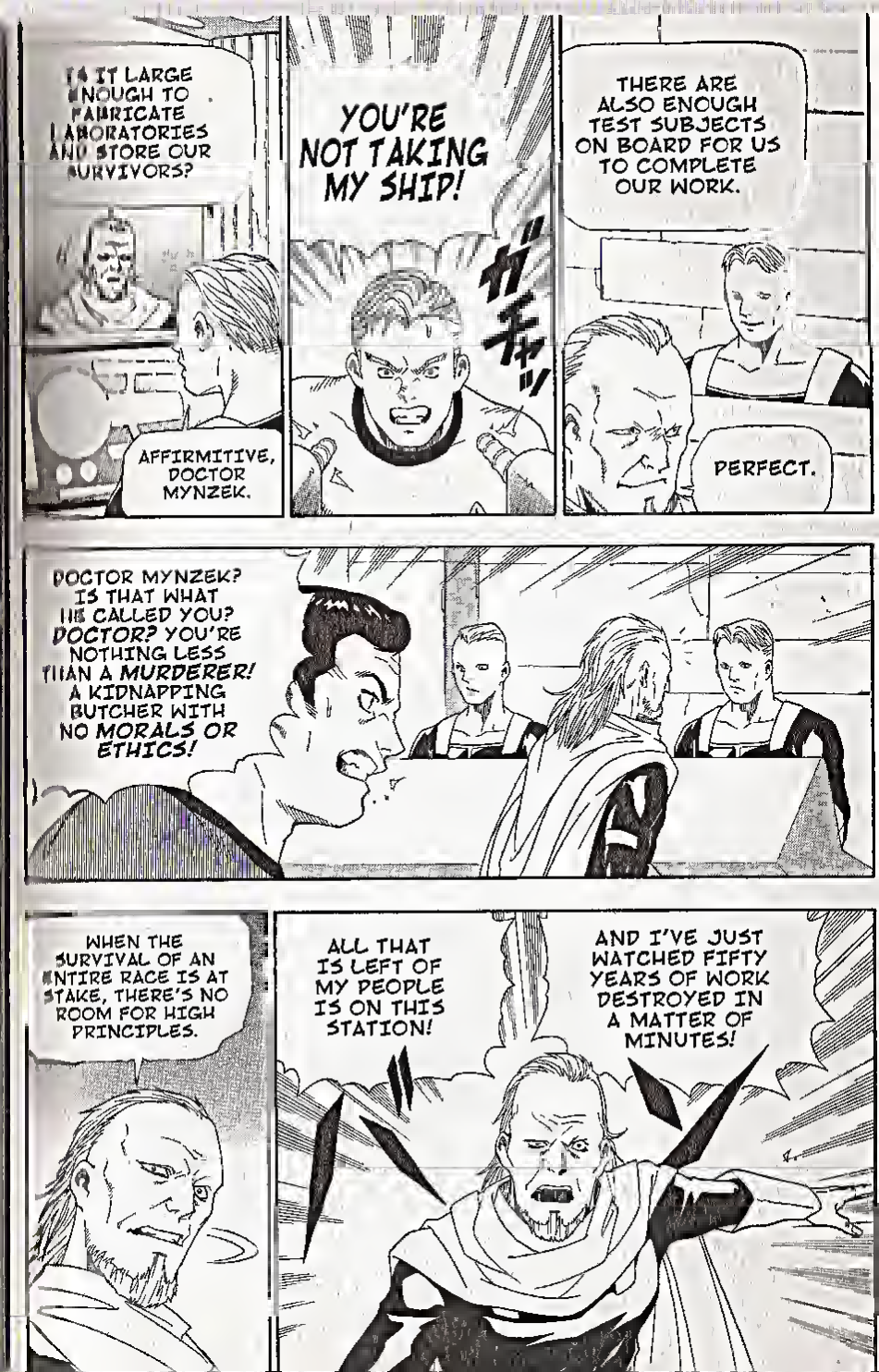
I WOULD SUGGEST YOU JOIN US ON THE TOP DECK, BUT THE SITUATION HERE IS PRECARIOUS.
YES, CAPTAIN...

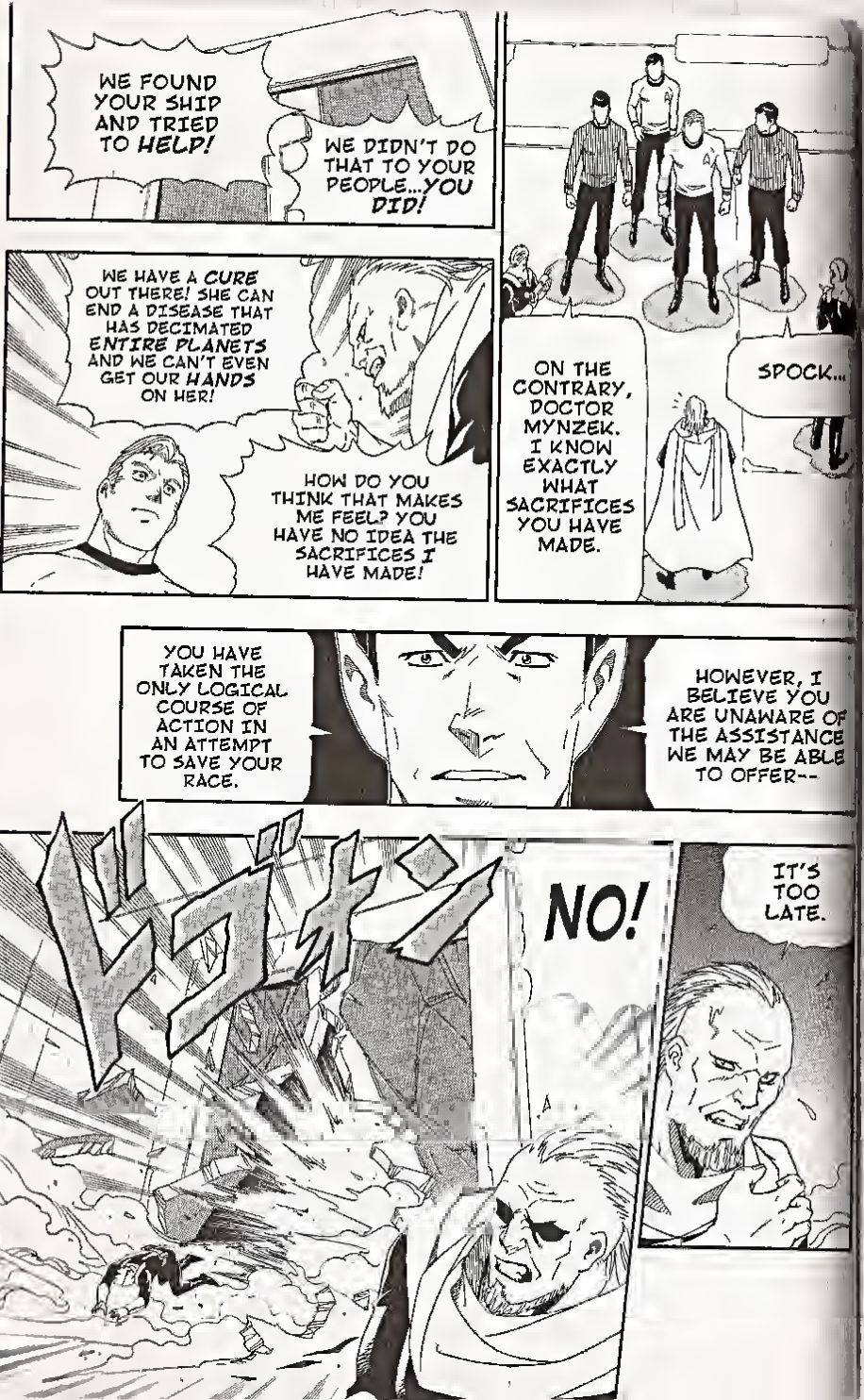
MISTER SCOTT... TRANSPORTING US OUT WOULD BE MOST WELCOME AT THIS TIME.
THERE'S TOO MUCH INTERFERENCE FROM THOSE SHIELDED DOORS, MISTER SPOCK...YOU NEED TO MOVE AWAY FROM THEM!
?!

ゴゥン
SULU! COME ON! THERE'S GOT TO BE ANOTHER WAY UP!
ゴゥン
ゴゥン
ゴバァ
SO MUCH FOR AVOIDING A FIGHT...
ドン
ドン
SET PHASERS ON HEAVY STUN.
SPOCK! BONES! TRY TO FORCE YOUR WAY THROUGH-- WE CAN BEAM OUT FROM OVER HERE!
?!

ゴゴゴゴゴ
GET DOWN!
ゴゴゴゴ
?!
KNOCK-- THE DOOR!
ドドドドドドドド
FIRE!


ゴゴゴゴ
THIS WAY! QUICKLY!
HM...
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD THANK--
カチャ
STUDY THEIR WEAPONS. SEE HOW THEY'VE BEEN ADAPTED.
I THINK YOU OWE US AN EXPLANATION.
REPORT ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE ALIEN VESSEL.

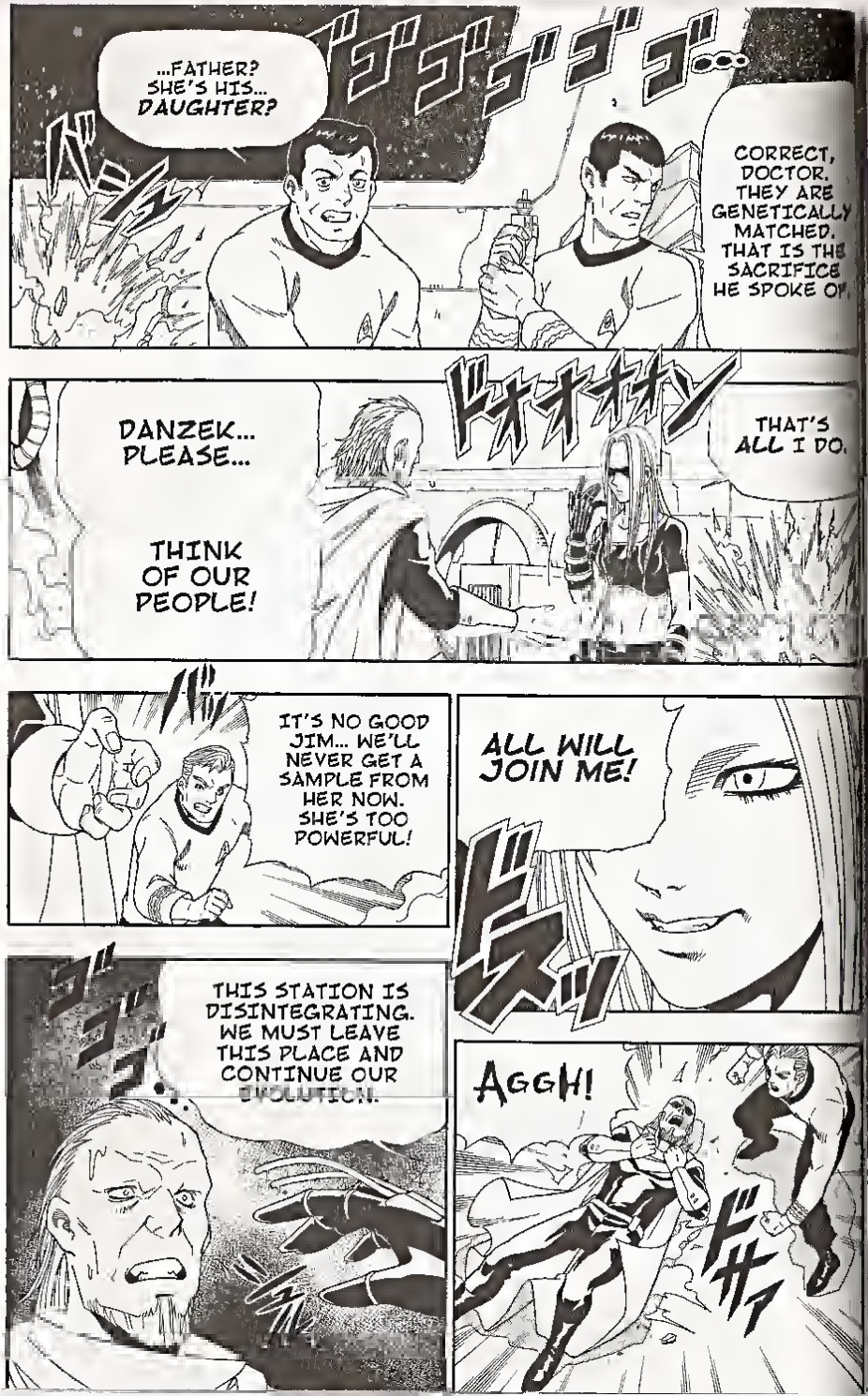

IS IT LARGE ENOUGH TO FABRICATE LABORATORIES AND STORE OUR SURVIVORS?
AFFIRMITIVE, DOCTOR MYNZEK.
YOU'RE NOT TAKING MY SHIP!
ガチャッ
THERE ARE ALSO ENOUGH TEST SUBJECTS ON BOARD FOR US TO COMPLETE OUR WORK.
PERFECT.
DOCTOR MYNZEK? IS THAT WHAT THEY CALLED YOU? DOCTOR? YOU'RE NOTHING LESS THAN A MURDERER! A KIDNAPPING BUTCHER WITH NO MORALS OR ETHICS!
WHEN THE SURVIVAL OF AN ENTIRE RACE IS AT STAKE, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR HIGH PRINCIPLES.
ALL THAT IS LEFT OF MY PEOPLE IS ON THIS STATION!
AND I'VE JUST WATCHED FIFTY YEARS OF WORK DESTROYED IN A MATTER OF MINUTES!

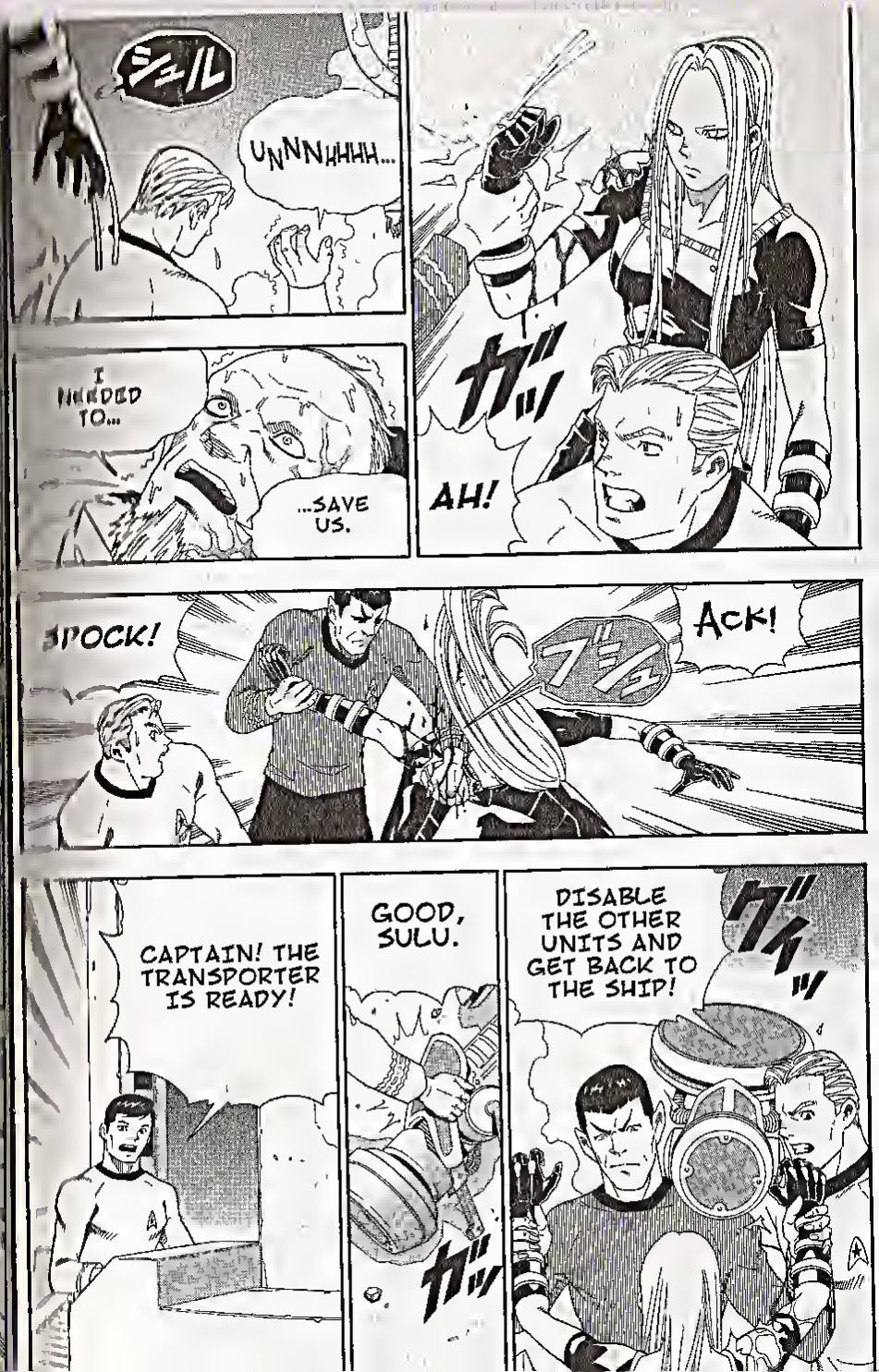

WE FOUND YOUR SHIP AND TRIED TO HELP!
WE DIDN'T DO THAT TO YOUR PEOPLE...YOU DID!
WE HAVE A CURE OUT THERE! SHE CAN END A DISEASE THAT HAS DECIMATED ENTIRE PLANETS AND WE CAN'T EVEN GET OUR HANDS ON HER!
HOW DO YOU THINK THAT MAKES ME FEEL? YOU HAVE NO IDEA THE SACRIFICES I HAVE MADE!
ON THE CONTRARY, DOCTOR MYNZEK. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT SACRIFICES YOU HAVE MADE.
SPOCK...
YOU HAVE TAKEN THE ONLY LOGICAL COURSE OF ACTION IN AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE YOUR RACE.
HOWEVER, I BELIEVE YOU ARE UNAWARE OF THE ASSISTANCE WE MAY BE ABLE TO OFFER--
ドロップキック
NO!
IT'S TOO LATE.

AGGH!
SET TO KILL. DESTROY THEM--BUT LEAVE HER TO ME!
バシュ
バシュ
NOW LOOK WHAT YOU HAVE FORCED ME TO DO!
YOU NEVER LISTENED, DID YOU? YOU KNEW MORE THAN ANYONE WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO. WHY DIDN'T YOU HELP ME WHEN I ASKED YOU?

SHE IS CONTAINED.
GOOD. WE'LL CONTINUE OUR WORK ON THE ALIEN SHIP.
READY TO BOARD. WE WILL USE THEM AS HOSTAGES TO SUBDUE THE REST OF THE CREW.
BE GENTLE WITH HER.
YES, SIR.
ガッ
AGH!
DANZEK! NO!
ゴゴゴ

MY... DEAR...
NOW, SPOCK!
ゴゴゴ
ガク
YES, CAPTAIN.
DOCTOR MYNZEK!
SULU! SEE IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT THAT TRANSPORTER!
ヴゥン
AYE, SIR!
ONLY I CAN SAVE THEM NOW. ONLY I CAN OFFER THEM MORE, MAKE THEM GREATER THAN WHAT THEY WERE.
DON'T... PLEASE...
WHY CAN'T YOU ACCEPT WHAT I HAVE TO OFFER...
...FATHER?!


...FATHER? SHE'S HIS... DAUGHTER?
ゴゴゴゴゴ...
バシュ
CORRECT, DOCTOR. THEY ARE GENETICALLY MATCHED. THAT IS THE SACRIFICE HE SPOKE OF.
DANZEK... PLEASE...
THINK OF OUR PEOPLE!
ドオオオン
THAT'S ALL I DO.
IT'S NO GOOD JIM... WE'LL NEVER GET A SAMPLE FROM HER NOW. SHE'S TOO POWERFUL!
ALL WILL JOIN ME!
ドズッ
THIS STATION IS DISINTEGRATING. WE MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE AND CONTINUE OUR EVOLUTION.
AGGH!
ドサァ

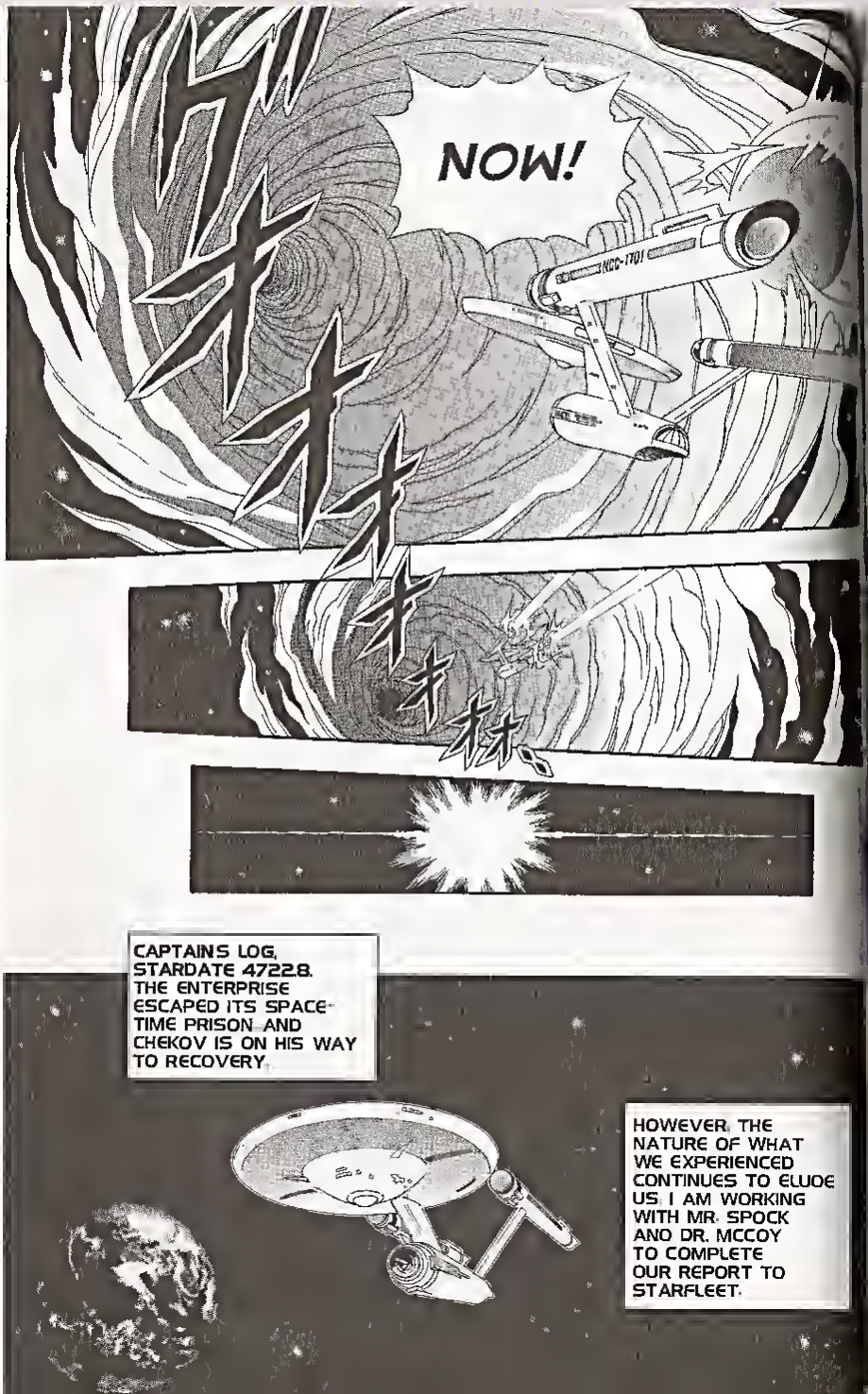

シュル
UNNNHHHH...
I NEEDED TO...
...SAVE US.
ガッ!!
AH!
SPOCK!
ブン
ACK!
CAPTAIN! THE TRANSPORTER IS READY!
GOOD, SULU.
ガッ!!
DISABLE THE OTHER UNITS AND GET BACK TO THE SHIP!
ガッ!!

IT LOOKS LIKE SHE COULD HAVE BEAT YOU, SPOCK.
INDEED.
ゴト…
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
ゴゴゴゴ
JIM, WAIT!
WITHOUT A SAMPLE, CHEKOV COULD DIE!
I'LL GO BACK!

WHAT?
WHY YOU CLEVER VULCAN.
FIVE SECONDS!
FOUR!
THREE!
TWO!
ONE!
ゴゴゴ

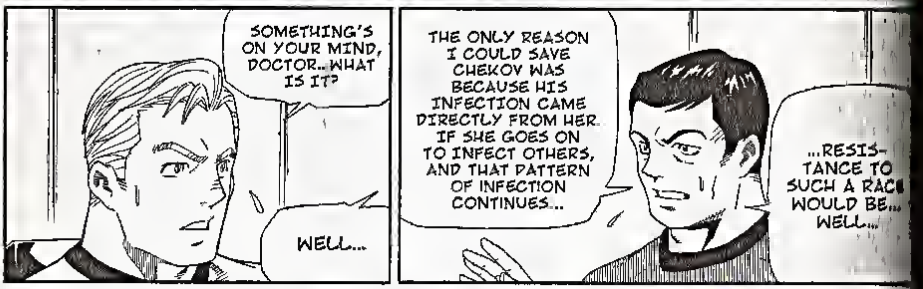
REPORT!
WE'RE FREE. BUT WITH THE STATION'S SHIELDS FAILING, WE'RE BEING PULLED INTO THE BLACK HOLE!
THE STATION IS OPENING MULTIPLE WORMHOLES ... INCLUDING THE ONE THROUGH WHICH WE ARRIVED.

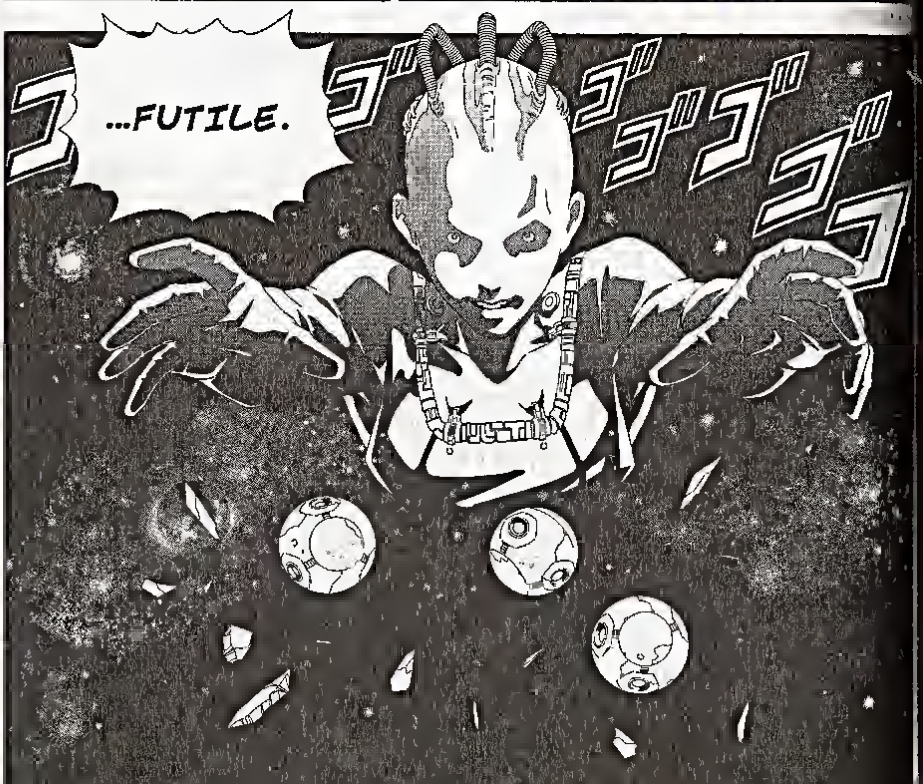
IT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STATION, CAPTAIN. I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN GET TO IT!
WE HAVE VERY LITTLE CHOICE LEFT, MR. SULU.
WARP SPEED!


NOW!
NCC-1701
CAPTAINS LOG, STARDATE 4722.8. THE ENTERPRISE ESCAPED ITS SPACE-TIME PRISON AND CHEKOV IS ON HIS WAY TO RECOVERY.
HOWEVER, THE NATURE OF WHAT WE EXPERIENCED CONTINUES TO ELUDE US. I AM WORKING WITH MR. SPOCK AND DR. MCCOY TO COMPLETE OUR REPORT TO STARFLEET.

プシュー
WHY, SPOCK, YOU LOOK WORRIED... YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ADMIT I WAS ACTUALLY RIGHT ABOUT THEM, WERE YOU?
HAVING REVIEWED THE SENSOR LOGS DURING OUR ESCAPE, DOCTOR, I BELIEVE THERE IS GENUINE CAUSE FOR CONCERN.
PLEASE OBSERVE.
AS THE STATION'S SHIELDS COLLAPSED, SEVERAL ESCAPE PODS WERE JETTISONED.
ボス ボス
MOST OF THEM MOST LIKELY FIRED AS A RESULT OF SYSTEM MALFUNCTIONS.
COULD THERE HAVE BEEN SURVIVORS, SPOCK?
UNCERTAIN, CAPTAIN. HOWEVER...
...IT APPEARS ONE ESCAPE POD...
...WAS PILOTED DELIBERATELY INTO ANOTHER WORMHOLE.

IF THE FEMALE MUTANT WAS ABOARD THE ESCAPE POD, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHERE--OR WHEN--SHE MAY HAVE EXITED.
READINGS INDICATE THE STATION GAVE OFF A MASSIVE TEMPORAL DISTORTION AS IT EXPLODED. WE ESCAPED ITS EFFECTS, BUT IF THAT POD WAS CAUGHT IN ITS WAKE, IT COULD HAVE BEEN SENT THOUSANDS OF YEARS INTO THE FUTURE... OR THE PAST.

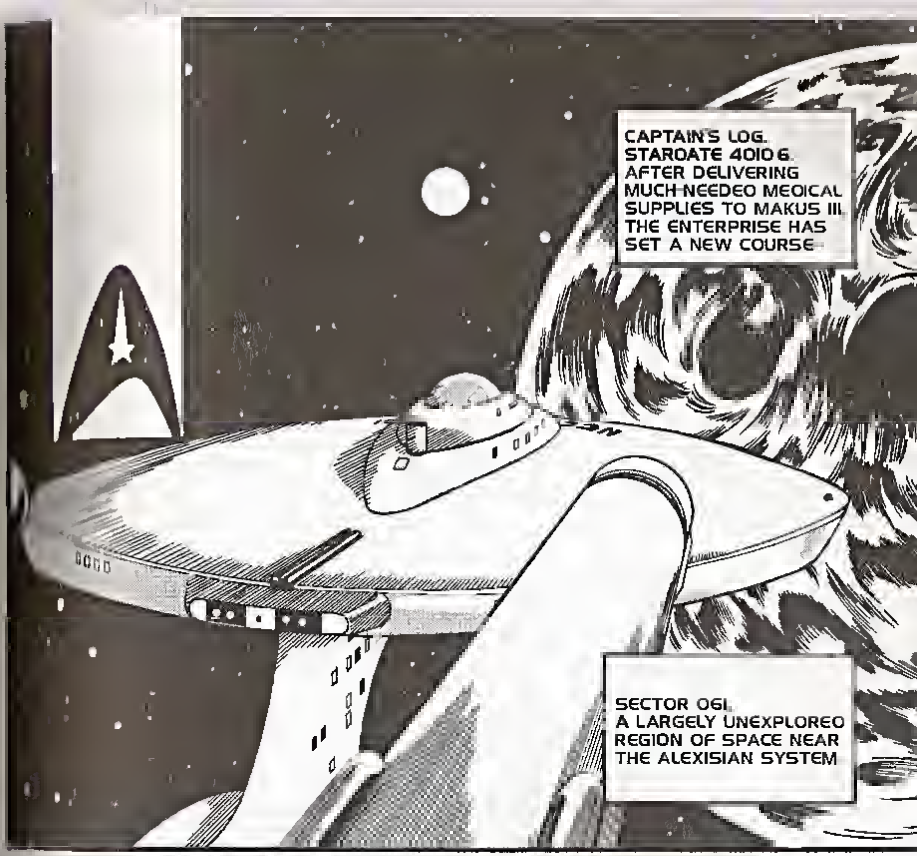

SOMETHING'S ON YOUR MIND, DOCTOR...WHAT IS IT?
WELL...
THE ONLY REASON I COULD SAVE CHEKOV WAS BECAUSE HIS INFECTION CAME DIRECTLY FROM HER. IF SHE GOES ON TO INFECT OTHERS, AND THAT PATTERN OF INFECTION CONTINUES...
...RESISTANCE TO SUCH A RACE WOULD BE... WELL...


...FUTILE.
ゴゴゴゴゴ

VFP

Anything but Alone

Story by Joshua Ortega
Art by Gregory Giovanni Johnson


CAPTAIN'S LOG.
STARDATE 4010.6.
AFTER DELIVERING
MUCH-NEEDED MEDICAL
SUPPLIES TO MAKUS III,
THE ENTERPRISE HAS
SET A NEW COURSE.
SECTOR 061,
A LARGELY UNEXPLORED
REGION OF SPACE NEAR
THE ALEXISIAN SYSTEM.

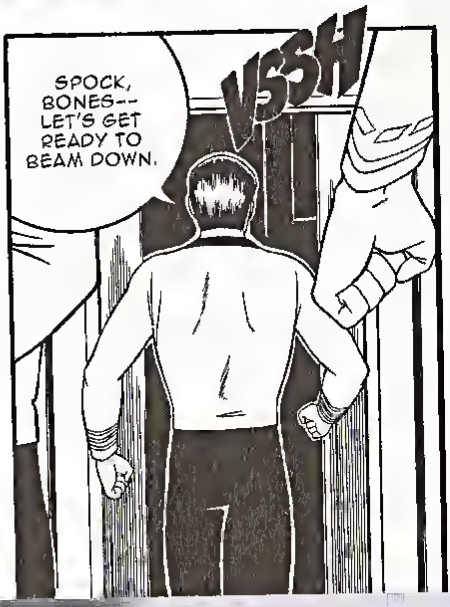
IT'S
GOOD TO BE
BACK ON THE
FRONTIER.

CAPTAIN I'M RECEIVING A TRANSMISSION FROM THE NEAREST PLANET...
...BUT I DON'T UNDER-STAND THE MESSAGE...
LET'S HEAR IT, UHURA.
IT'S STRANGE.
I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYTHING LIKE IT.
CAPTAIN, IF I MAY?
OF COURSE, MR. SPOCK.

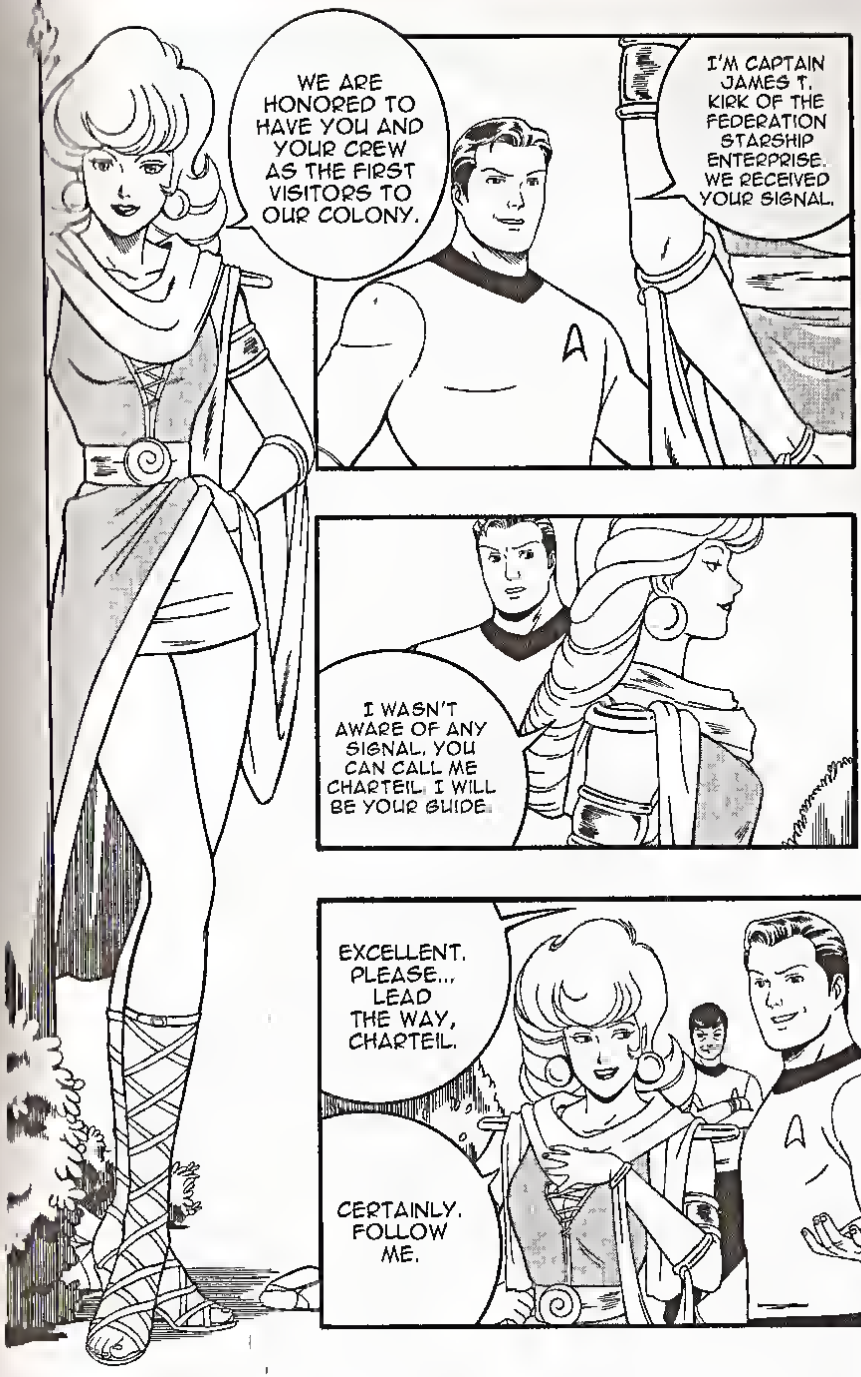
THIS SIGNAL--I RECALL IT FROM MY STUDIES ON VULCAN.
IT IS A UNIQUE FREQUENCY THAT WAS ONCE USED BY THE HUMANOID INHABITANTS OF THE PLANET XIMEGA.
HOWEVER, THE XIMEGANS--AND THEIR CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY--WERE PRESUMED TO HAVE BEEN DESTROYED WITH THEIR PLANET OVER ONE HUNDRED EARTH YEARS AGO.

I RECOMMEND FURTHER INVESTIGATION.
YOUR MIND NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME, SPOCK.

THIS IS TRUE, CAPTAIN--THOUGH I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO IT BY NOW.
TAKING YOU FOR GRANTED WOULD BE THE LAST THING I'D WANT TO DO, MR. SPOCK.
MR. SULU, YOU HAVE THE BRIDGE.

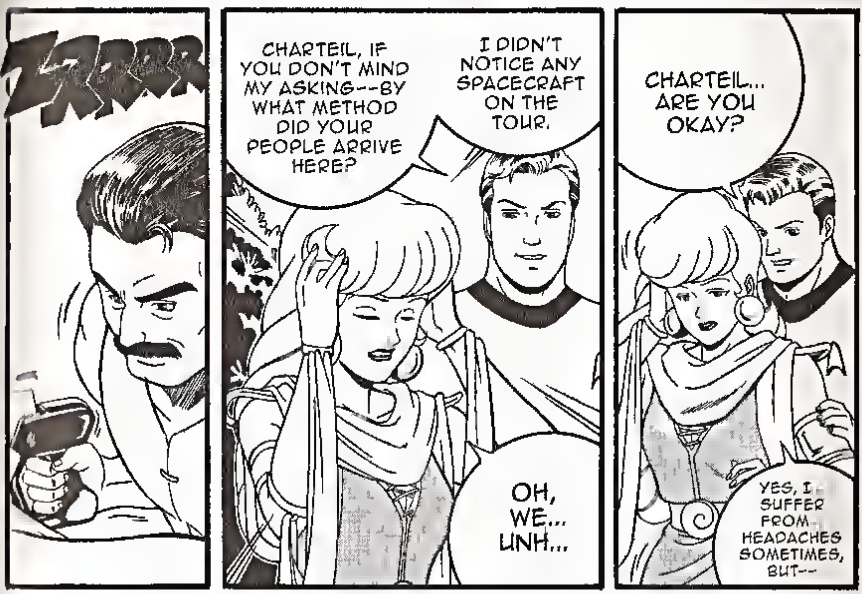

SPOCK, BONES--LET'S GET READY TO BEAM DOWN.
VSSH

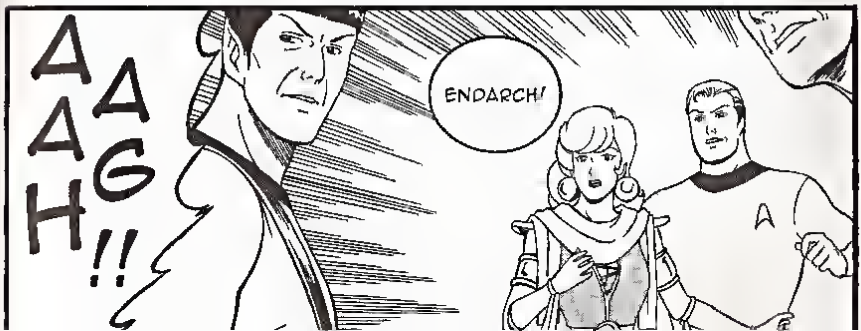
WOOOOOOO
WELCOME TO XIMEGA II.
HUH?


WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE YOU AND YOUR CREW AS THE FIRST VISITORS TO OUR COLONY.
I'M CAPTAIN JAMES T. KIRK OF THE FEDERATION STARSHIP ENTERPRISE. WE RECEIVED YOUR SIGNAL.
I WASN'T AWARE OF ANY SIGNAL. YOU CAN CALL ME CHARTEIL. I WILL BE YOUR GUIDE.
EXCELLENT. PLEASE... LEAD THE WAY, CHARTEIL.
CERTAINLY. FOLLOW ME.

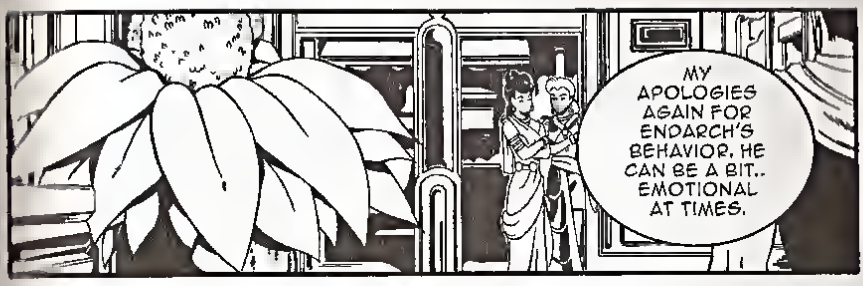
...AND HERE IS OUR GREAT LIBRARY..
...THIS IS WHERE WE STORE ALL OF THE DATA THAT WE WERE ABLE TO SALVAGE FROM OUR HOME PLANET BEFORE ITS DESTRUCTION.
HERE YOU WILL FIND EVERYTHING FROM OUR GREATEST EPICS AND STORIES TO OUR LAWS, CODES AND ETHICS...
...EVEN OUR PERSONAL RECORDS AND BIOLOGICAL DATA IS STORED HERE.
HOLO-GRAPHIC TECH-NOLOGY?
YES, EXACTLY.
FASC-INATING.

AND FINALLY, THIS IS OUR MANUAL LABOR PAVILION. A LIVING LINK TO OUR DISTANT PAST, WHERE WE ARE LEARNING--OR RATHER, RELEARNING--TO BE LESS RELIANT ON OUR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.


ZRRRR
CHARTEIL, IF YOU DON'T MIND MY ASKING--BY WHAT METHOD DID YOUR PEOPLE ARRIVE HERE?
I DIDN'T NOTICE ANY SPACECRAFT ON THE TOUR.
OH, WE... UNH...
CHARTEIL... ARE YOU OKAY?
YES, I SUFFER FROM HEADACHES SOMETIMES, BUT--


AAAGH!!
ENDARCH!

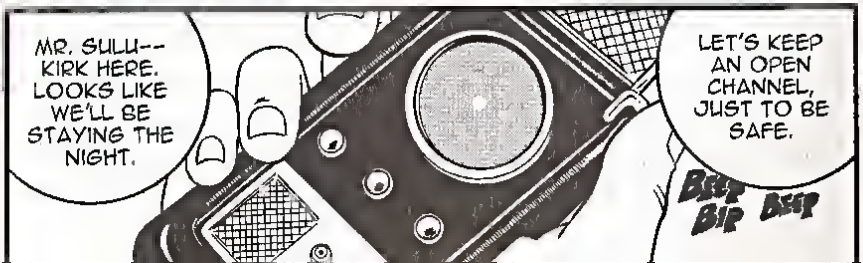
OW-- BLAST IT!
GOOD GOD, MAN.
I'M FINE... IT'LL BE FINE.
FINE, MY EYE--THAT'S A SERIOUS WOUND YOU HAVE THERE!
YOU NEEDN'T CONCERN YOURSELF, DOCTOR.
I JUST... I JUST WANT TO GET BACK TO WORK.
MOTHER OF--


MY APOLOGIES AGAIN FOR ENDARCH'S BEHAVIOR. HE CAN BE A BIT.. EMOTIONAL AT TIMES.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE.
THANK YOU.

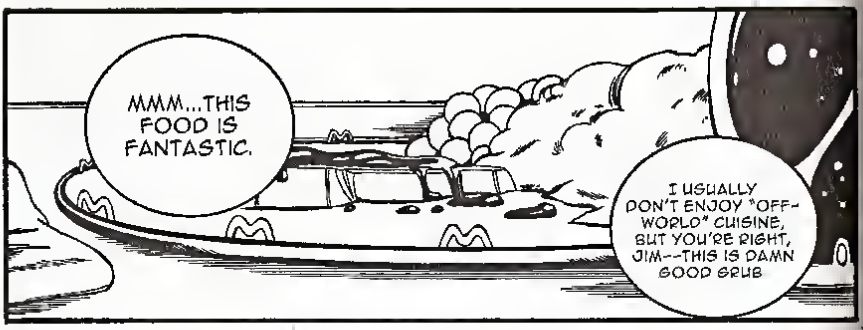
SO--DID YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT OUR OFFER, CAPTAIN?
YES--WE ACCEPT.

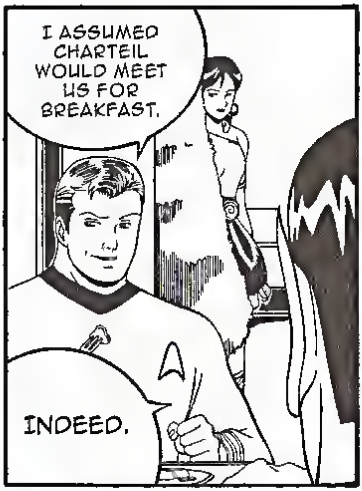
AS LONG AS IT'S NO BURDEN TO YOU OR YOUR PEOPLE.
NOT AT ALL. JANEL HAS ALREADY PREPARED YOUR ACCOMO-DATIONS.


MR. SULU--KIRK HERE. LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE STAYING THE NIGHT.
LET'S KEEP AN OPEN CHANNEL, JUST TO BE SAFE.
BEEP BIP BEEP

WELL, THERE'S OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING PECULIAR GOING ON
I AGREE, DR. MCCOY.
YOU HEAR THAT, JIM? HE JUST AGREED WITH ME. YOU'RE MY WITNESS.
THAT WAS A JOKE, DOCTOR?
SARCASM, SPOCK. ALMOST A JOKE.
WHAT HAVE YOU NOTICED, BONES?
WELL, FOR ONE THING, THAT MAN WITH THE SAW, ENDER--
ENDARCH.
YES, THANK YOU, SPOCK.
I'VE NEVER SEEN PHYSIOLOGY LIKE THAT.
HIS HAND HEALED WITHIN SECONDS.

SPOCK? YOUR THOUGHTS?
IT IS PUZZLING THAT CHARTEIL KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE SIGNAL WE RECEIVED AND YET SEEMED TO ANTICIPATE OUR ARRIVAL.
AND SOMETHING ELSE--VERY STRANGE FOR A COLONY...
THERE ARE NO CHILDREN. ANYWHERE. IF THEY'VE BEEN HERE FOR AS LONG AS CHARTEIL SAYS THEY HAVE.
NOT ANY COLONY THAT I'D LIKE TO BE A PART OF, I CAN TELL YOU THAT MUCH.
...WHY AREN'T THERE ANY CHILDREN? WHAT KIND OF A COLONY WOULDN'T REPRODUCE?
THE LOGICAL ANSWER IS THAT THIS IS A COLONY THAT *CANNOT* REPRODUCE.
IT'S WORTH GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF. STAY ALERT TOMORROW.
INDEED, CAPTAIN.


MMM...THIS FOOD IS FANTASTIC.
I USUALLY DON'T ENJOY "OFF-WORLD" CUISINE, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT, JIM--THIS IS DAMN GOOD GRUB

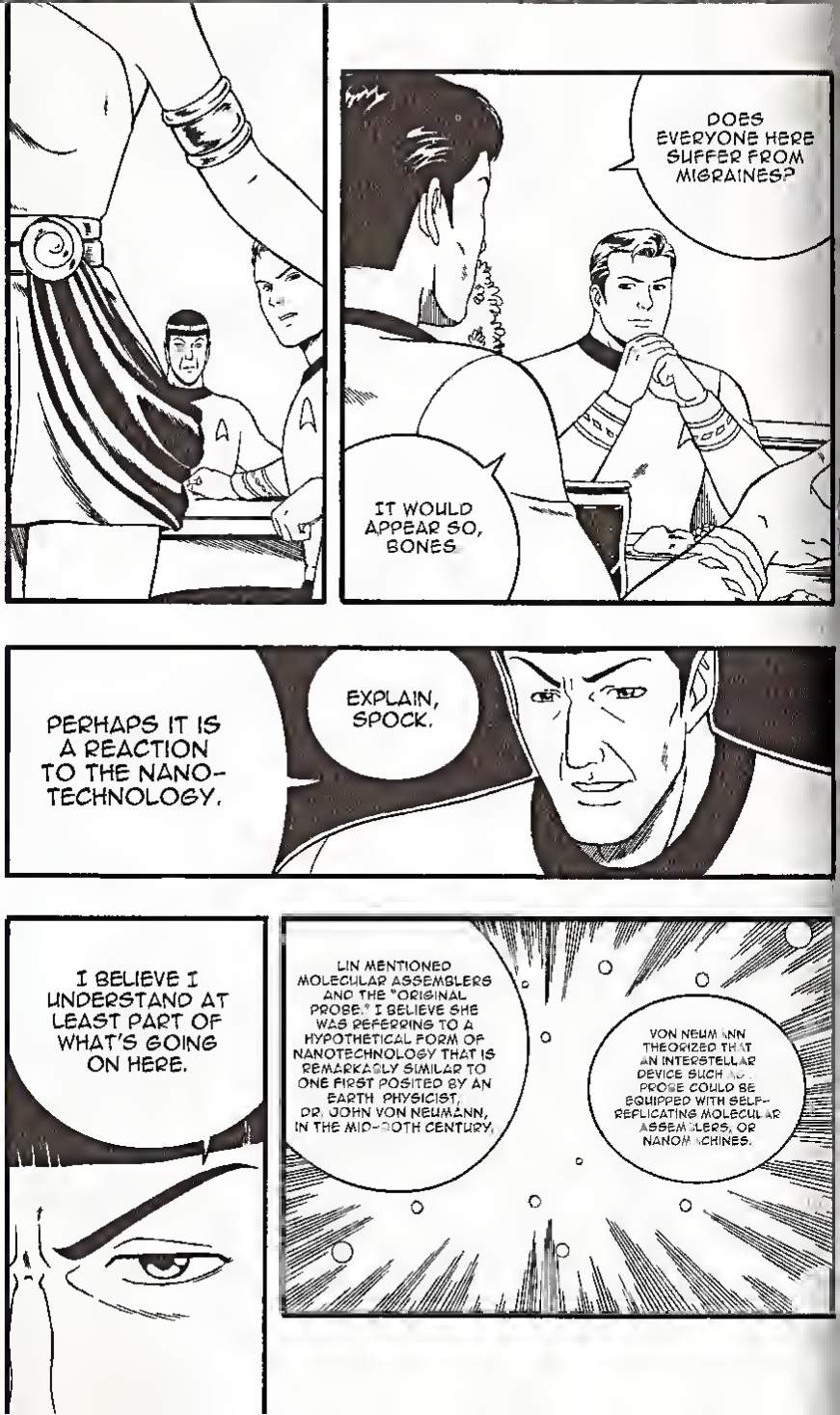

I ASSUMED CHARTEIL WOULD MEET US FOR BREAKFAST.
INDEED.

EXCUSE ME...? MAY I SPEAK WITH YOU FOR A MOMENT?

OF COURSE. PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT.
THANK YOU. MY NAME IS LIN.

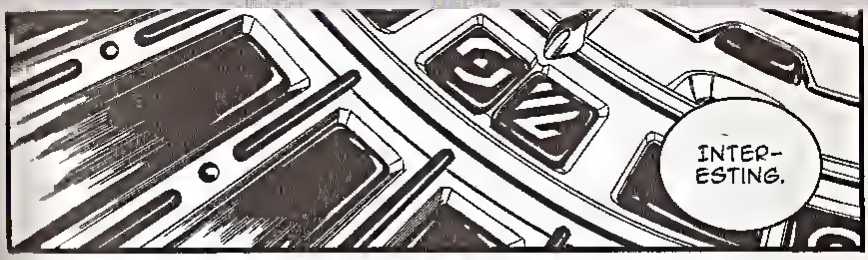
NICE TO MEET YOU, LIN. I'M CAPTAIN JAMES T. KIRK.
A PLEASURE, GENTLEMEN.
AND THIS IS DR. MCCOY, THE SHIP'S PHYSICIAN, AND MR. SPOCK, OUR SCIENCE OFFICER.

YOU...YOU MUST HAVE RECEIVED THE SIGNAL.
YES-- MR. SPOCK RECOGNIZED IT AS XIMEGAN.
PREKRAFT WOULD HAVE ENJOYED SPEAKING WITH SOMEONE LIKE YOU, MR. SPOCK.
PREKRAFT?
YES. HE IS-- WAS--XIMEGA'S MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTIST. I WAS HIS ASSISTANT. I HELPED HIM WITH SOME OF THE MOLECULAR ASSEMBLY TECHNOLOGY, AND LAUNCHING THE ORIGINAL PROBE, THOUGH HE--
WAIT--I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF.
WE--I'M CONFUSED, CAPTAIN.
YOU SENT THE SIGNAL. THAT'S WHY CHARTEIL AND THE OTHERS WERE UNAWARE OF IT.
YES. I'VE SPOKEN TO OTHER XIMEGANS ABOUT MY FEELINGS, BUT THEY IGNORE ME, AND PREKRAFT WON'T SEE ANYONE, AND I... I DIDN'T KNOW WHO TO TURN TO, SO I...
UNH... I.. I HAVE TO GO NOW. I'M SORRY...


DOES EVERYONE HERE SUFFER FROM MIGRAINES?
IT WOULD APPEAR SO, BONES.
EXPLAIN, SPOCK.
PERHAPS IT IS A REACTION TO THE NANO-TECHNOLOGY.
I BELIEVE I UNDERSTAND AT LEAST PART OF WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.
LIN MENTIONED MOLECULAR ASSEMBLERS AND THE "ORIGINAL PROBE." I BELIEVE SHE WAS REFERRING TO A HYPOTHETICAL FORM OF NANOTECHNOLOGY THAT IS REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO ONE FIRST POSITED BY AN EARTH PHYSICIST, DR. JOHN VON NEUMANN, IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY.
VON NEUMANN THEORIZED THAT AN INTERSTELLAR DEVICE SUCH AS THE PROBE COULD BE EQUIPPED WITH SELF-REPLICATING MOLECULAR ASSEMBLERS, OR NANOMACHINES.

BY REARRANGING MATTER AT AN ATOMIC LEVEL, THESE MICROSCOPIC MACHINES COULD THEORETICALLY BUILD A CITY, CREATE FOOD, LIVESTOCK--OR EVEN SENTIENT LIFE--SIMPLY BY MANIPULATING THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT.
HORSEFEATHERS, SPOCK. CLONING IS ONE THING, BUT YOU CAN'T JUST CREATE *PEOPLE* FROM THIN AIR--THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
I BEG TO DIFFER, DOCTOR. WERE ONE TO DEVELOP A TECHNOLOGY CAPABLE OF STORING CONSCIOUSNESS AS ELECTRONIC DATA, IT IS THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE TO COMBINE IT WITH NANO-SCALE ENGINES TO GENERATE AN ENTIRE COLONY OF HUMAN BEINGS.
THAT'S PURE SCIENCE FICTION. NO ONE HAS THAT KIND OF TECHNOLOGY.
IT IS, AS I SAID, THEORETICAL.
BUT HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT WHAT WAS ONCE REGARDED AS FICTION OFTEN BECOMES REALITY.
SPOCK, DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
WHY ENDARCH'S WOUND HEALED SO FAST? WHY THERE'S NO SIGN OF A SPACE-CRAFT...?
I AM ONLY SAYING THAT IT IS POSSIBLE, CAPTAIN. MAYBE THIS SCIENTIST--PREKRAFT--COULD PROVIDE US WITH THE ANSWERS WE SEEK.
AGREED. LET'S FINISH UP OUR MEAL AND--

YOU GO AHEAD AND FINISH IF YOU WANT TO, JIM. IF THIS--"FOOD" WAS CREATED BY WEIRD LITTLE MACHINES--I THINK I'LL TAKE A RAINCHECK.
SCOTT
YES--HIS LABORATORY IS THAT TALL BUILDING THERE. BUT PREKRAFT HASN'T SPOKEN TO ANYONE IN YEARS.
SO WE'VE HEARD. THANK YOU.
AND HE DOESN'T TAKE KINDLY TO UNEXPECTED GUESTS.
HE'LL MAKE AN EXCEPTION FOR US.
IF YOU SAY SO.
WELL, JIM, THAT WAS COMFORTING
DON'T WORRY, BONES--WE'LL BE FINE.
"IF YOU SAY SO."
MOST IMPRESSIVE.

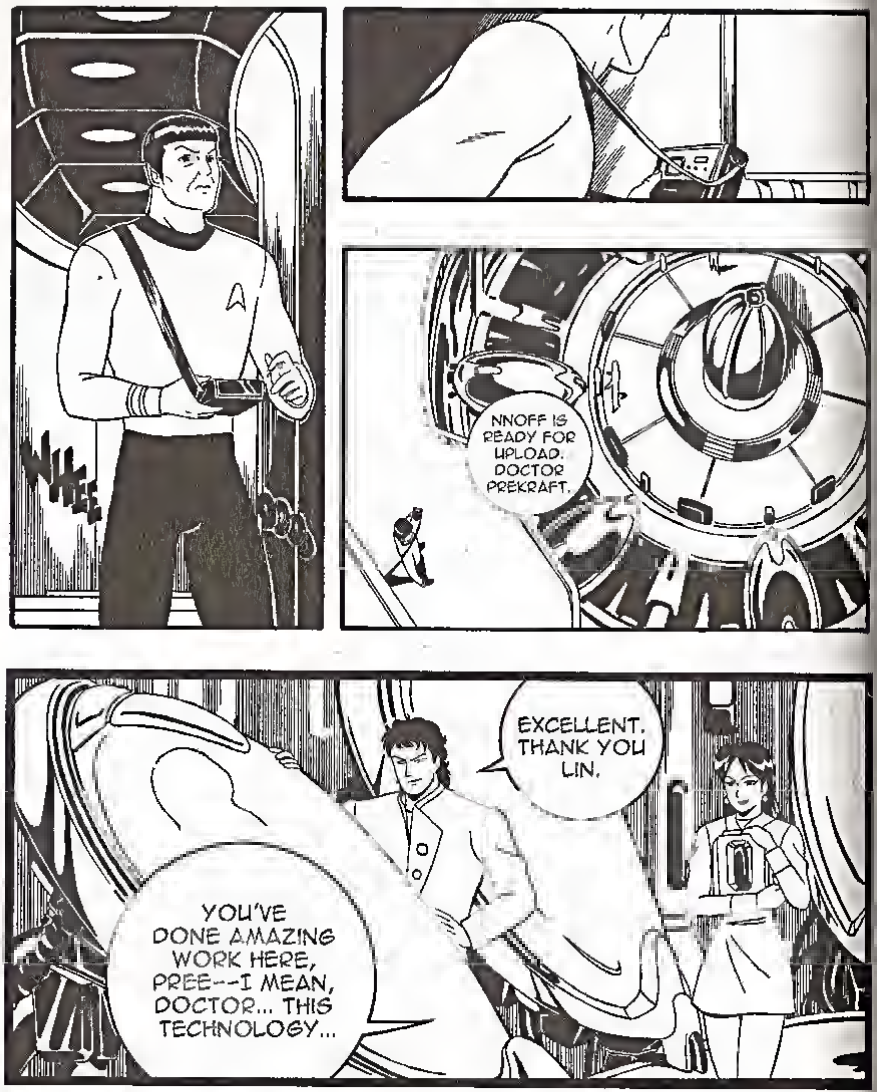

INTER-
ESTING.

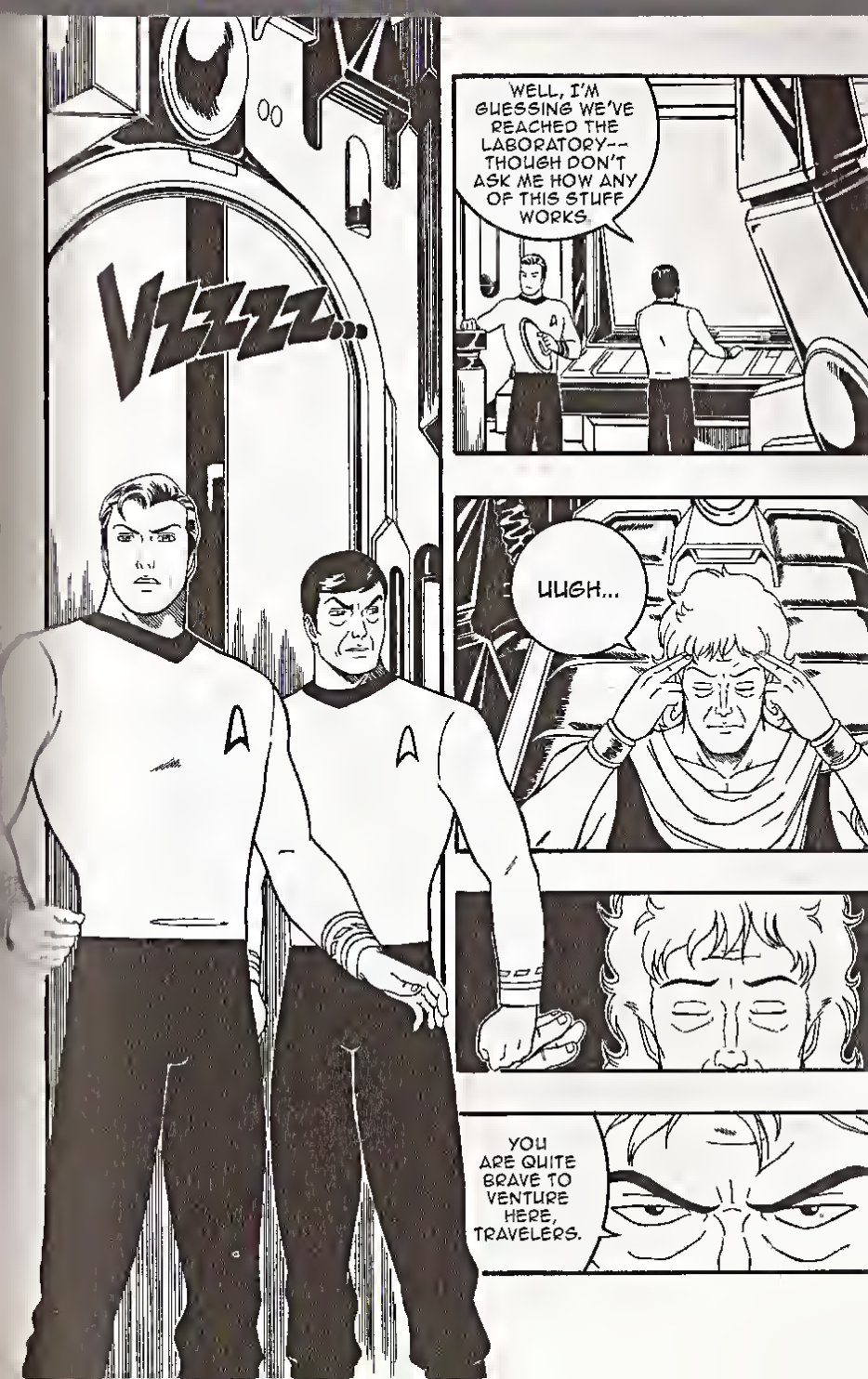
WHAT IS IT?
THERE IS AN ORGANIC LIFEFORM-- HUMANOID-- STRAIGHT AHEAD.
MOST LIKELY PREKRAFT. AND TO THE LEFT, A HIGHLY UNUSUAL ENERGY READING--

--ONE I'VE NOT SEEN BEFORE
AND I BET YOU JUST CAN'T WAIT TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS, EH, SPOCK?

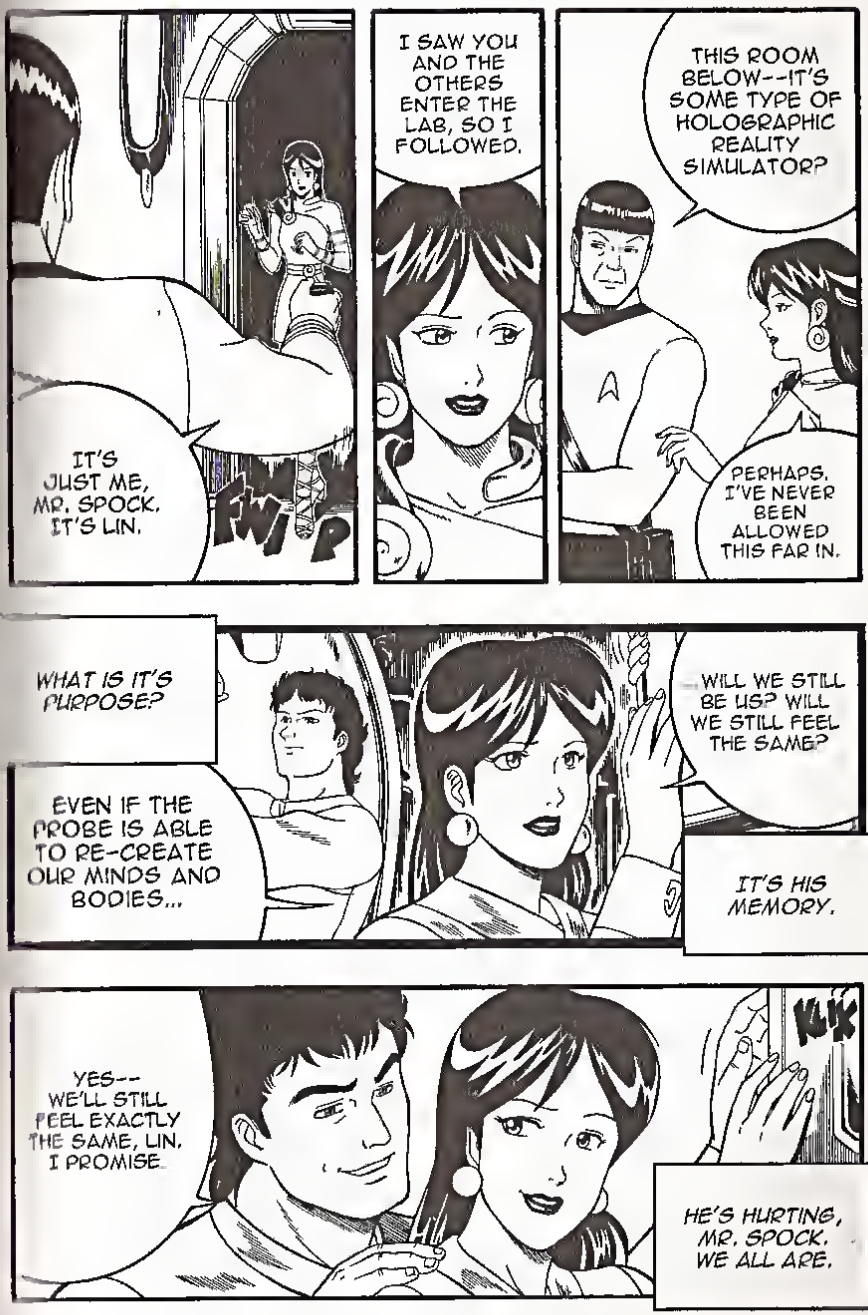
I CAN WAIT, DR. MCCOY-- BUT YES, I AM INTRIGUED.
ALL RIGHT--
BONES AND I WILL TAKE THE PATH AHEAD.
SPOCK, YOU INVESTIGATE THE READING TO THE LEFT.

KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE ENTERPRISE VIA COMMUNICATOR..
..AND BEAM OUT IF THERE'S ANY TROUBLE


WHEE
NNOFF IS READY FOR UPLOAD, DOCTOR PREKRAFT.
EXCELLENT. THANK YOU LIN.
YOU'VE DONE AMAZING WORK HERE, PREE--I MEAN, DOCTOR... THIS TECHNOLOGY...
YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE, MR. SPOCK.


VZZZZ...
WELL, I'M GUESSING WE'VE REACHED THE LABORATORY-- THOUGH DON'T ASK ME HOW ANY OF THIS STUFF WORKS.
UUGH...
YOU ARE QUITE BRAVE TO VENTURE HERE, TRAVELERS.

I DIDN'T AUTHORIZE ANY VISITORS.
YOU MUST BE PREKRAFT.
YES-- AND YOU ARE CAPTAIN KIRK. YOU DON'T BELONG HERE.
I APOLOGIZE FOR OUR INTRUSION, BUT WE WERE HOPING THAT--
HOPE? HA. THERE IS...UNH...NO SUCH THING AS HOPE HERE, CAPTAIN.
HOPE *DIES* HERE.
PREKRAFT?
EVERYTHING DIES HERE.


IT'S JUST ME, MR. SPOCK. IT'S LIN.
FWIP
I SAW YOU AND THE OTHERS ENTER THE LAB, SO I FOLLOWED.
THIS ROOM BELOW--IT'S SOME TYPE OF HOLOGRAPHIC REALITY SIMULATOR?
PERHAPS. I'VE NEVER BEEN ALLOWED THIS FAR IN.
WHAT IS IT'S PURPOSE?
EVEN IF THE PROBE IS ABLE TO RE-CREATE OUR MINDS AND BODIES...
WILL WE STILL BE US? WILL WE STILL FEEL THE SAME?
IT'S HIS MEMORY.
YES-- WE'LL STILL FEEL EXACTLY THE SAME, LIN. I PROMISE.
KLIK
HE'S HURTING, MR. SPOCK. WE ALL ARE.

IT'S SO HARD TO LET GO OF THE PAST.
THE ONLY THING THAT DOESN'T DIE, CAPTAIN KIRK...
...IS ME.

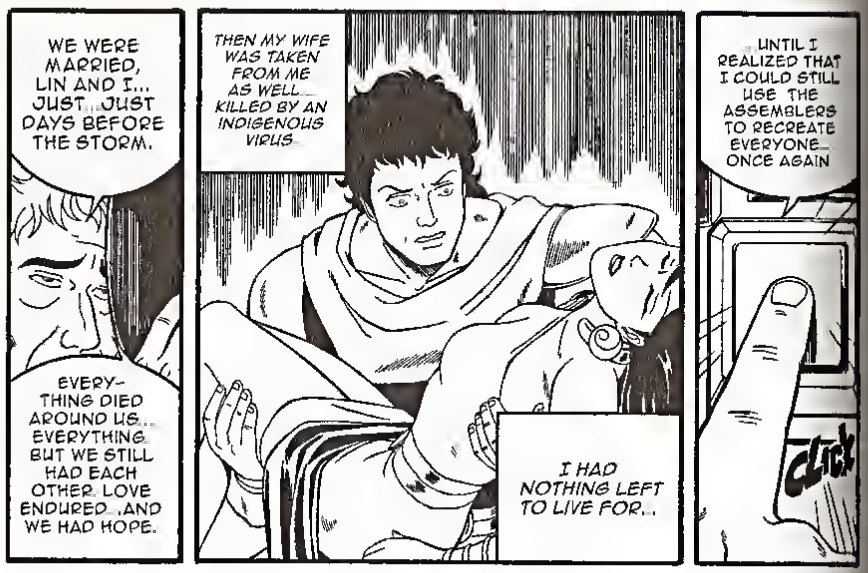
I'M EVERYTHING, DO YOU KNOW THAT? EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY.
I DIDN'T WANT TO BE...I JUST WANTED TO SAVE MY PEOPLE. OUR PLANET WAS ABOUT TO DIE.
YOU'RE REFERRING TO XIMEGA IN WHEN YOUR SUN WENT SUPERNOVA?

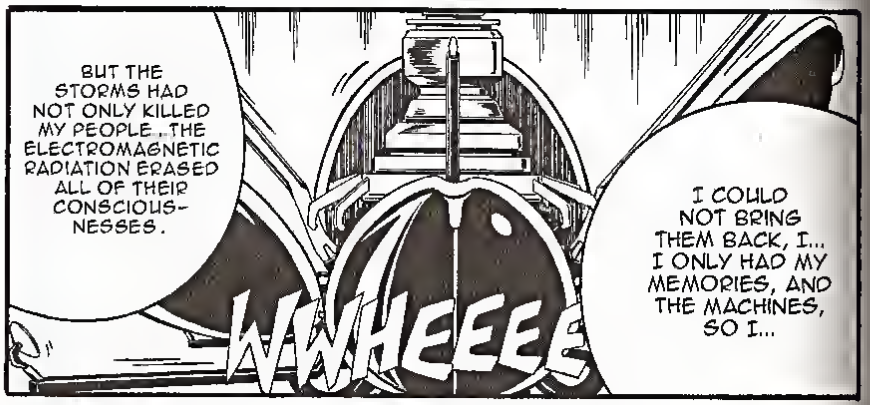
YES...CHARTEIL TOLD YOU, I ALWAYS REMEMBERED HER BEING SO HELPFUL. I REMEMBERED HER WELL..

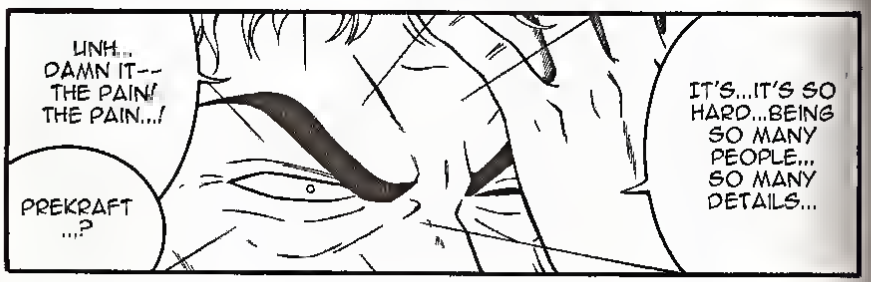
THIS PROBE, THIS VERY PROBE...IT RE-CREATED US ALL, CAPTAIN. AN ENTIRE COLONY--OUR STRUCTURES, OUR CULTURE, OUR BODIES, OUR MINDS, OUR DREAMS... EVEN OUR SOULS, ALL BORN AGAIN.

OUR ORIGINAL BODIES WERE DEAD..
...BUT WE STILL LIVED.
IT WAS BEAUTIFUL... PERFECT, REALLY...

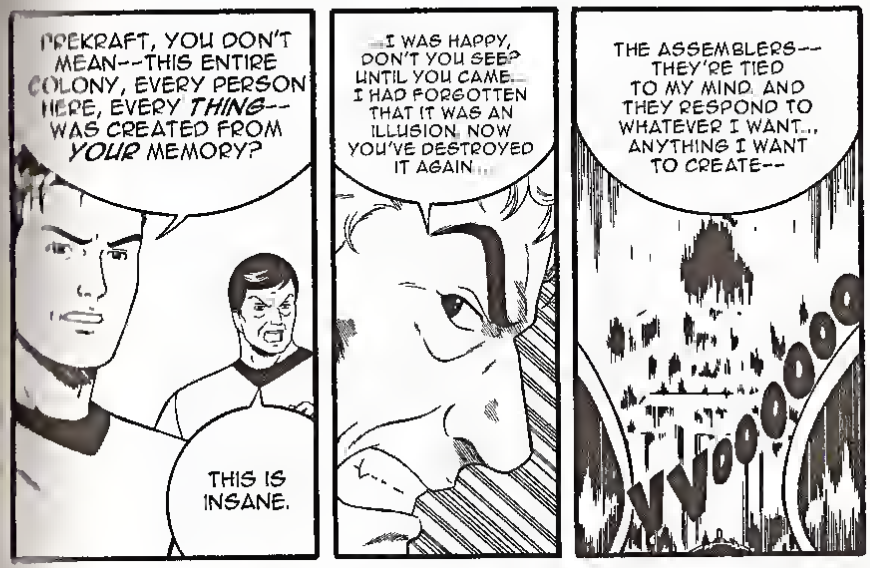
...THEN THE SOLAR STORMS CAME.
PREKRAFT AND I WERE UNDERGROUND WHEN THE STORMS HIT... WE--WE WERE THE ONLY SURVIVORS.
OUR COLONY WAS DESTROYED... EVERYTHING ORGANIC REDUCED TO ASH, ANIMALS AND PEOPLE ALIKE... SO HORRIBLE...
JUST ME AND... I...I DION'T EVEN REMEMBER THIS, I... I WASN'T JUST HIS ASSISTANT...
..HOW CAN SOMEBODY FORGET THAT?


WE WERE MARRIED, LIN AND I... JUST...JUST DAYS BEFORE THE STORM.
EVERY-THING DIED AROUND US... EVERYTHING. BUT WE STILL HAD EACH OTHER. LOVE ENDURED...AND WE HAD HOPE.
THEN MY WIFE WAS TAKEN FROM ME AS WELL... KILLED BY AN INDIGENOUS VIRUS.
I HAD NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR...
...UNTIL I REALIZED THAT I COULD STILL USE THE ASSEMBLERS TO RECREATE EVERYONE... ONCE AGAIN
CLICK


BUT THE STORMS HAD NOT ONLY KILLED MY PEOPLE...THE ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION ERASED ALL OF THEIR CONSCIOUS-NESSES.
WWHEEEE
I COULD NOT BRING THEM BACK, I... I ONLY HAD MY MEMORIES, AND THE MACHINES, SO I...


UNH... DAMN IT-- THE PAIN! THE PAIN...!
PREKRAFT ...?
IT'S...IT'S SO HARD...BEING SO MANY PEOPLE... SO MANY DETAILS...

I WAS HAPPY... FINALLY...WITH ALL OF MY PEOPLE...
ALL OF THEM...
I REMEMBERED THEM ALL, DIDN'T I?
THE MACHINES MADE THEM LIKE I REMEMBERED...JUST LIKE I REMEMBERED! PULLED THEM FROM MY MIND...AND I WAS HAPPY...


PREKRAFT, YOU DON'T MEAN--THIS ENTIRE COLONY, EVERY PERSON HERE, EVERY THING-- WAS CREATED FROM YOUR MEMORY?
THIS IS INSANE.
...I WAS HAPPY, DON'T YOU SEE? UNTIL YOU CAME... I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS AN ILLUSION. NOW YOU'VE DESTROYED IT AGAIN...
THE ASSEMBLERS-- THEY'RE TIED TO MY MIND. AND THEY RESPOND TO WHATEVER I WANT.., ANYTHING I WANT TO CREATE--
WWOOOOOOOO

WWOOOOOOOO
--ANYTHING.

I WAS HAPPY... FINALLY...WITH ALL OF MY PEOPLE...
ALL OF THEM...
I REMEMBERED THEM ALL, DIDN'T I?
THE MACHINES MADE THEM LIKE I REMEMBERED...JUST LIKE I REMEMBERED! PULLED THEM FROM MY MIND...AND I WAS HAPPY...

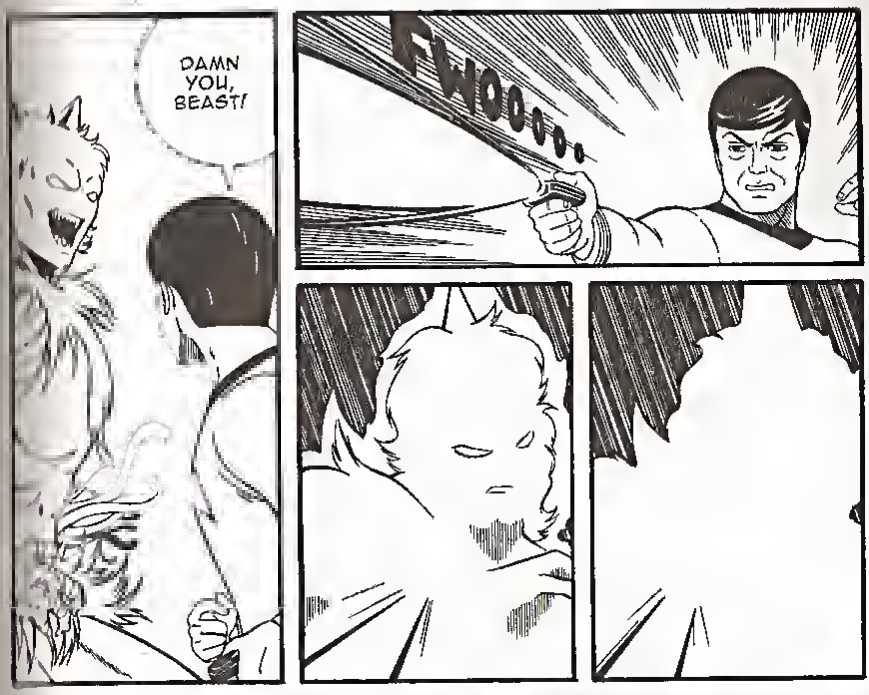
PREKRAFT, YOU DON'T MEAN--THIS ENTIRE COLONY, EVERY PERSON HERE, EVERY *THING*-- WAS CREATED FROM *YOUR* MEMORY?
THIS IS INSANE.

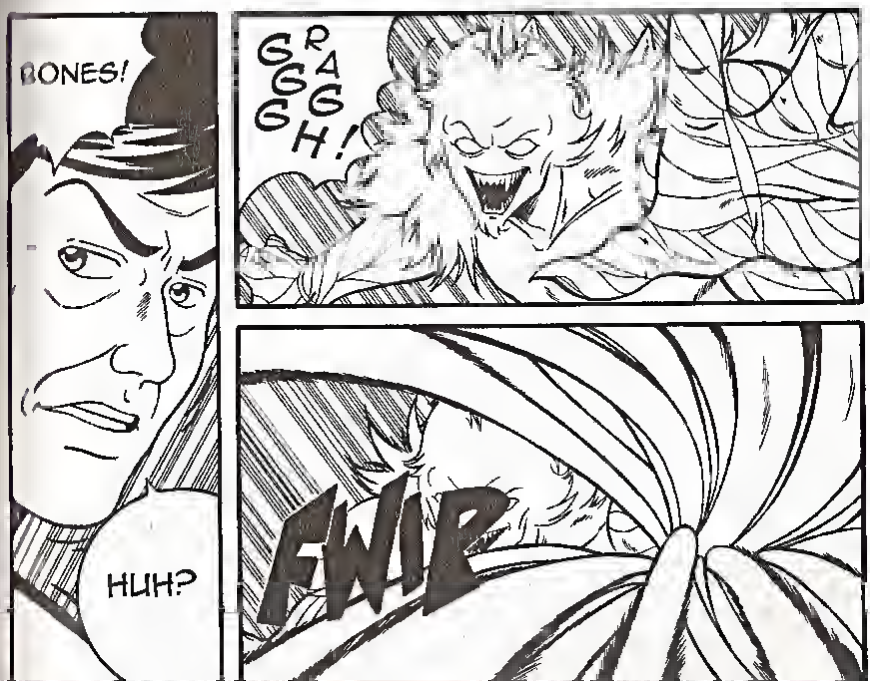
I WAS HAPPY, DON'T YOU SEE? UNTIL YOU CAME... I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS AN ILLUSION. NOW YOU'VE DESTROYED IT AGAIN...

THE ASSEMBLERS-- THEY'RE TIED TO MY MIND. AND THEY RESPOND TO WHATEVER I WANT... ANYTHING I WANT TO CREATE--
WWOOOOOOO

WWOOOOOOO
--ANYTHING.

RRRAAARGH!!
OUR COMMUNICATORS AREN'T WORKING.
WE CAN'T BEAM OUT!
BEEP BIP BEEP
GRRR
FHOO
UNGH!
JIM!
KHAK


DAMN YOU, BEAST!
FWOOOO..


BONES!
HUH?
GRAGGGH!
FWIP

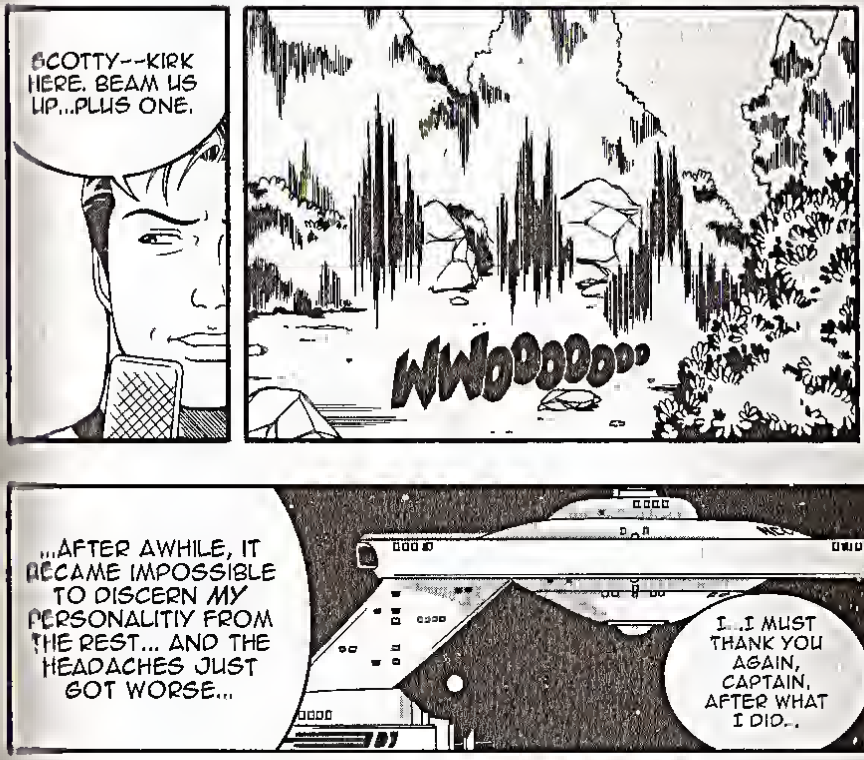
UNNNNH...
PREKRAFT...
WE CAN HELP Y--
AGH!
FWIP
RRRRRRGH!!
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
GRAGGGGHH!

I DON'T *WANT* TO KILL YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME HERE!
MY GOD, MAN--YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY BLAME US FOR THIS!
PREKRAFT, PLEASE-- YOU CREATED EVERYONE-- THEY'RE ALL A PART OF YOUR MIND, AND--
SHUT UP-- NOW!!
WHEN LIN SENT US THE SIGNAL--THAT WAS *YOU*, A *PART* OF YOU CRYING OUT FOR HELP! *YOU* NEED HELP, AND WE--
I SAID SHUT UP!!
THEY'RE RIGHT, MY LOVE...
...WE ALL NEED HELP.
VSSH
LIN...?

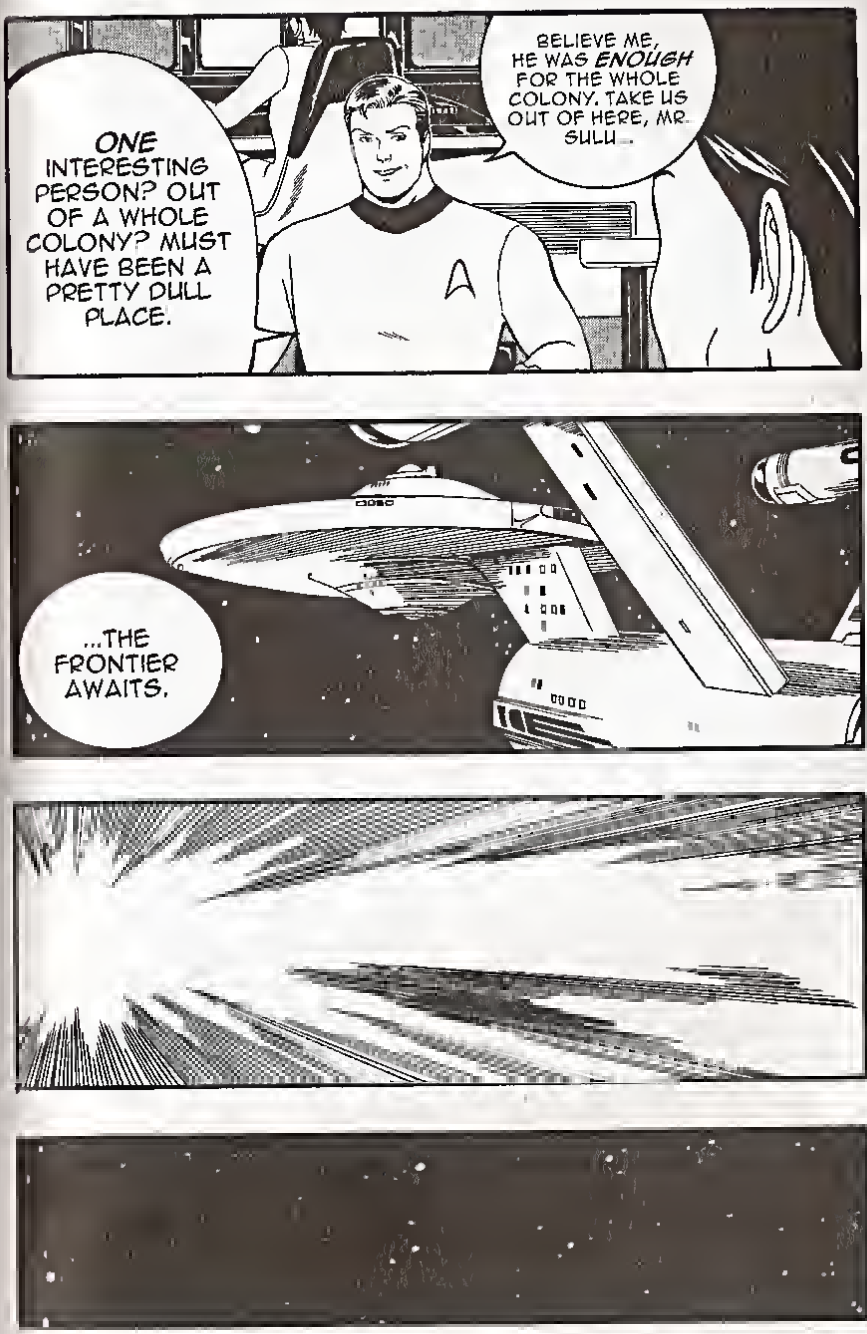
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, I... MY BRAIN...
...UNH... IT'S ON FIRE...
PREE!
...I'M SO SORRY...
RAGH!
I CAN'T STOP IT...
PREKRAFT! LET US HELP!
ARRRRGGHH!
WHAM
THESE PEOPLE ARE REAL, PREE.
THEY WILL HELP US.
THEY WILL HELP YOU.

I'M SO SORRY... I LOVE YOU SO MUCH...
SHH.. I KNOW YOU DO. JUST SLEEP NOW, MY SWEET...IT'S ALL RIGHT...YOU CAN REST NOW.
Bik
RUMMMMM
KRAK
THE COLONY... WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I BELIEVE LIN IS DISASSEMBLING THE COLONY.
KRUMMMMM
YOU CAN LET GO AND STILL REMEMBER ME.
I AM WITH YOU.
I ALWAYS WILL BE.

THANK YOU, CAPTAIN.
PLEASE, TAKE CARE OF HIM.
GOODBYE...
GOODBYE...
GOODBYE
AMAZING-- NOT EVEN A TRACE OF THE ASSEMBLERS REMAIN.
BEEP BIP
BEEP
WWHEEOOOOO
HE'S FINE, JIM--VITAL SIGNS ARE NORMAL.
GOOD, BONES.


SCOTTY--KIRK HERE. BEAM US UP...PLUS ONE.
WWOOOOOO
...AFTER AWHILE, IT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCERN MY PERSONALITIY FROM THE REST... AND THE HEADACHES JUST GOT WORSE...
I...I MUST THANK YOU AGAIN, CAPTAIN, AFTER WHAT I DID..
IT'S THE PAST, PREKRAFT-- DON'T DWELL ON IT.
YOU'RE RIGHT-- AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT LIN WOULD HAVE TOLD ME. I WILL ALWAYS CHERISH HER MEMORY, CAPTAIN KIRK...AND THIS CHANCE AT A NEW BEGINNING
I'M SURE YOU WILL.

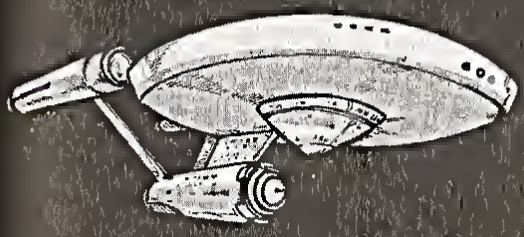
YOU GET SOME REST NOW, PREKRAFT. I'LL CHECK BACK WITH YOU LATER.
REST... YES.
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO A NICE, RESTFUL SLEEP. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME...
YOU'VE MORE THAN EARNED IT, PREKRAFT.
VSSH
WE'LL SEE YOU SOON.
WELCOME BACK, CAPTAIN.
THANK YOU, UHURA.
MEET ANY INTERESTING PEOPLE DOWN THERE?
WELL...
...JUST ONE.

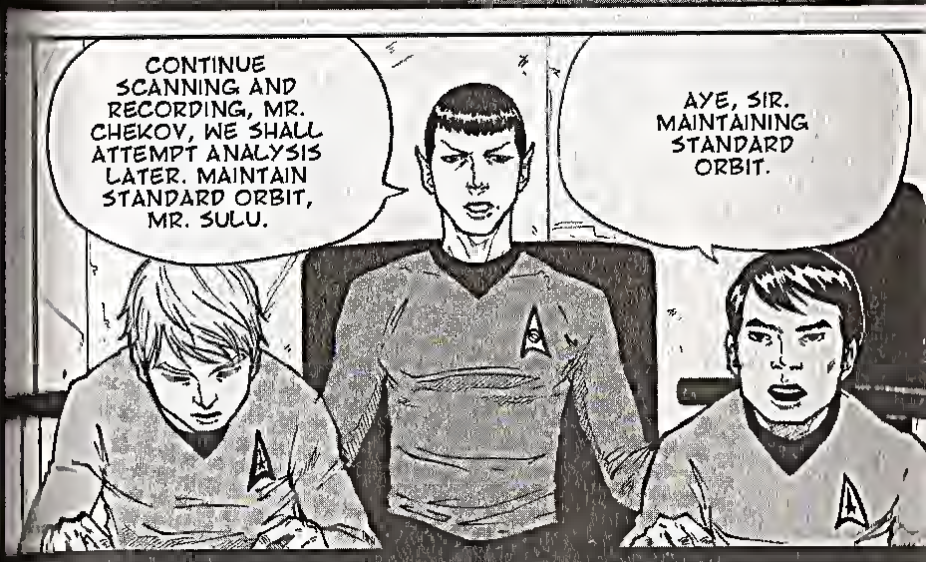

ONE INTERESTING PERSON? OUT OF A WHOLE COLONY? MUST HAVE BEEN A PRETTY DULL PLACE.
BELIEVE ME, HE WAS ENOUGH FOR THE WHOLE COLONY. TAKE US OUT OF HERE, MR. SULU...
...THE FRONTIER AWAITS.

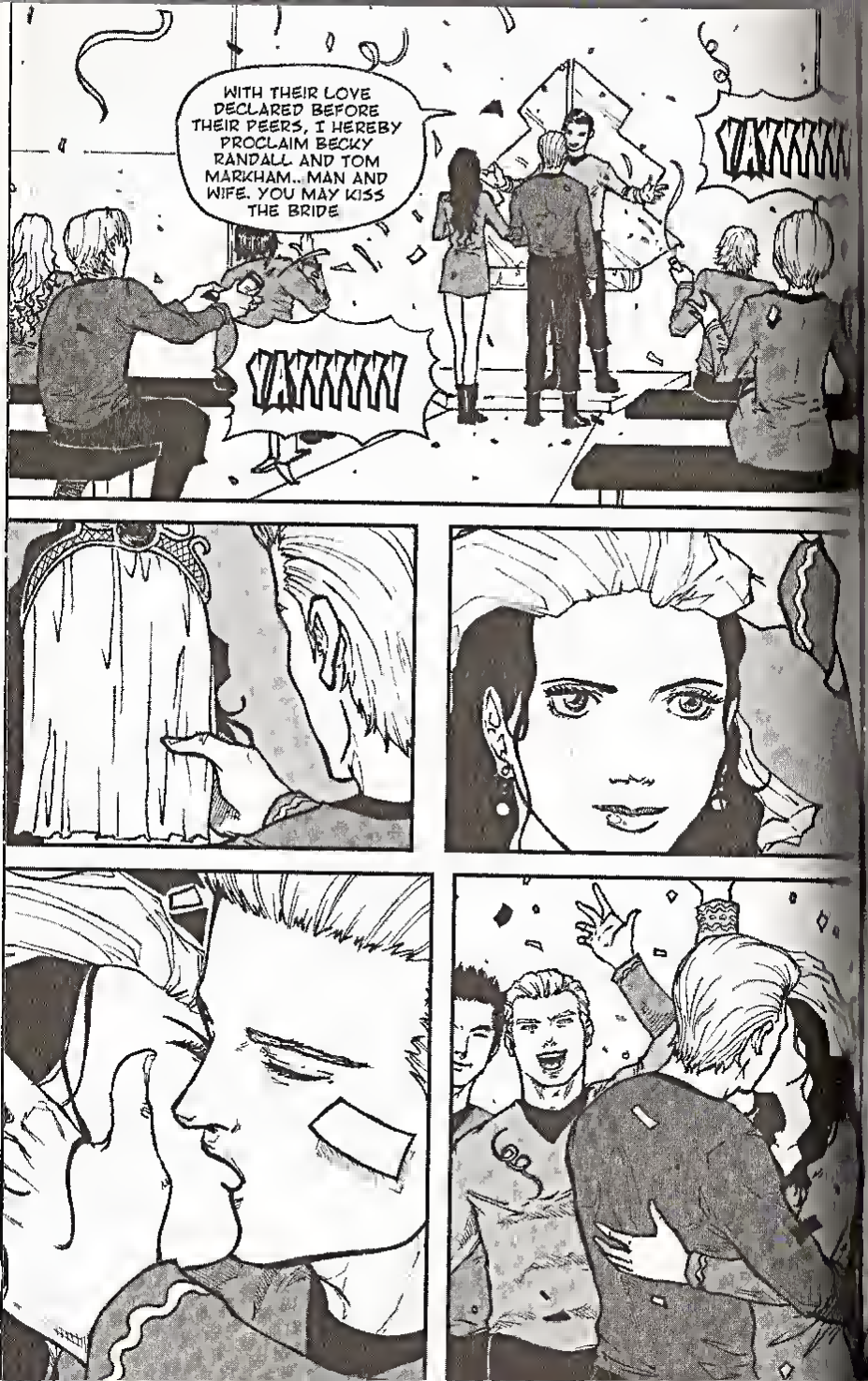
'Til Death

Story by Mike W. Barr
Art by Jeong Mo Yang

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 3376.5.
SCIENCE OFFICER SPOCK REPORTING. THE ENTERPRISE, RESUMING ITS MISSION OF MAPPING UNEXPLORED PLANETARY SYSTEMS IN DEEP SPACE, IS INVESTIGATING A WORLD THAT, THOUGH OF THE PROPER AGE AND CIRCUMSTANCES TO BEAR LIFE, APPEARS LIFELESS.




CONTINUE SCANNING AND RECORDING, MR. CHEKOV, WE SHALL ATTEMPT ANALYSIS LATER. MAINTAIN STANDARD ORBIT, MR. SULU.
AYE, SIR. MAINTAINING STANDARD ORBIT.

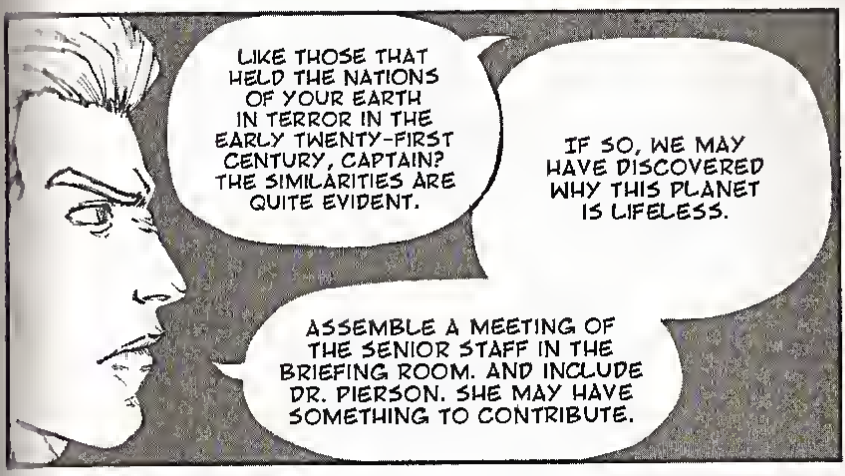

WITH THEIR LOVE DECLARED BEFORE THEIR PEERS, I HEREBY PROCLAIM BECKY RANDALL AND TOM MARKHAM... MAN AND WIFE. YOU MAY KISS THE BRIDE
VAAAAAA
VAAAAAA

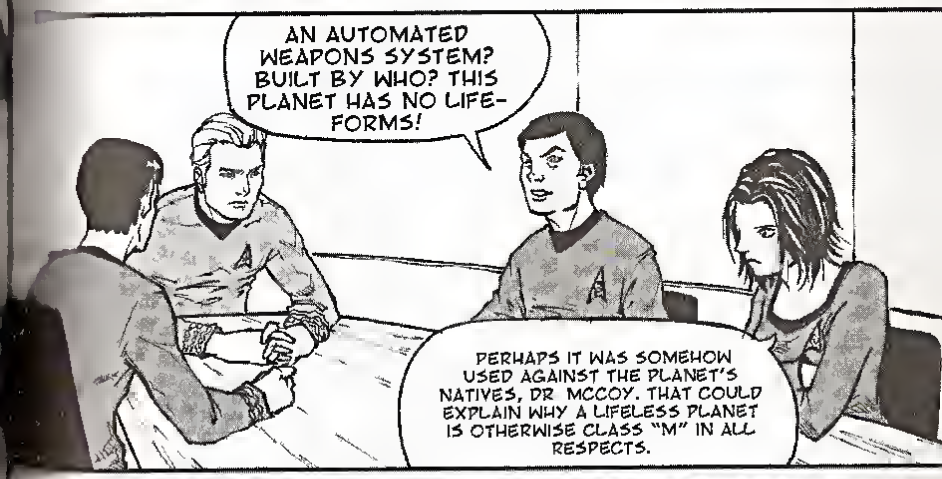
A LOVELY CEREMONY, CAPTAIN. THE MARKHAMS LOOK SO HAPPY.
I HOPE THEY'LL ALWAYS REMAIN SO, DR. PIERSON.
TELL ME, CAPTAIN, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF TYING THE KNOT?
I BELIEVE I ALREADY HAVE, DOCTOR--LIKE EVERY CAPTAIN, I'M MARRIED TO MY SHIP.

WE'VE BEEN LOCKED ONTO BY SOMETHING DOWN THERE.
SHIELDS UP. GO TO YELLOW ALERT.
NOW I'M READING WEAPONS, SIR. MISSILES ON A HEADING STRAIGHT FOR US!
DOES THE FACT THAT YOU'RE ALREADY MARRIED PRECLUDE YOU FROM HAVING DINNER WITH A VISITING DOCTOR LATER TONIGHT, CAPTAIN?
NOT AT ALL, DOCTOR...THOUGH WE'VE ALREADY HAD DESSERT--
RED ALERT. ALL HANDS, BATTLE STATIONS. CAPTAIN TO THE BRIDGE.

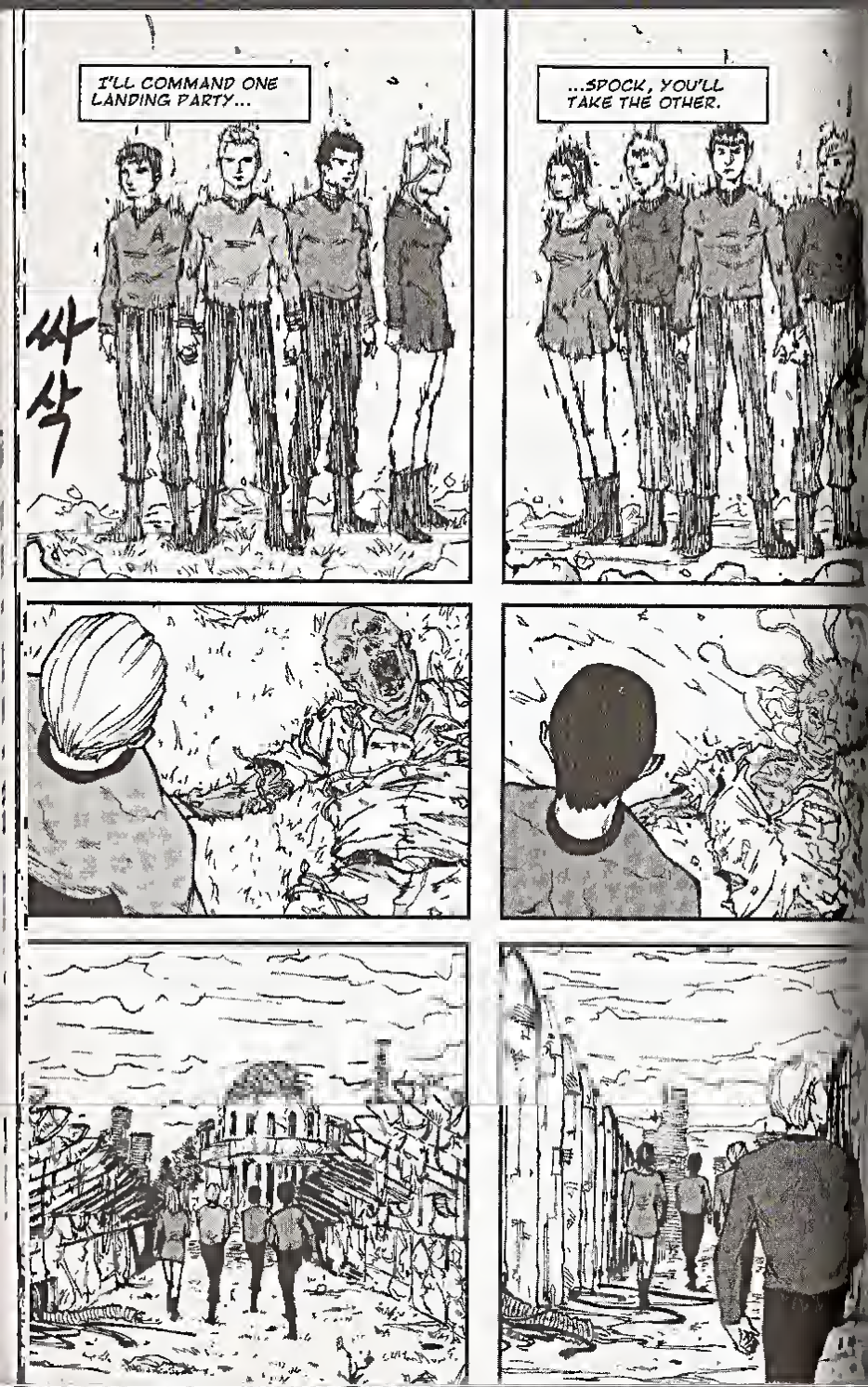
WE ARE UNDER A MISSILE ATTACK FROM THE PLANET, CAPTAIN. NO KNOWN CAUSE OR REASON FOR THE BOMBARDMENT.
ALL POWER TO FORWARD SHIELDS!
THE SHIELDS HELD, CAPTAIN. NO WOUNDED REPORTED.
ANOTHER ROUND COMING AT US, CAPTAIN!

MR. SULU, INCREASE ORBIT TO FIVE THOUSAND KILOMETERS.
THAT SHOULD POSITION US BEYOND THE RANGE OF FUTURE ATTACKS, CAPTAIN--
--BUT THAT'S ONLY A STOPGAP MEASURE, MR. SPOCK. I'VE NO INTENTION OF LETTING WHOEVER IS BEHIND THIS CHASE US AWAY!
SPOCK, HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT THESE ATTACKS FROM A LIFELESS PLANET MAY BE THE WORK OF AN AUTOMATED SYSTEM?


LIKE THOSE THAT HELD THE NATIONS OF YOUR EARTH IN TERROR IN THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, CAPTAIN? THE SIMILARITIES ARE QUITE EVIDENT.
IF SO, WE MAY HAVE DISCOVERED WHY THIS PLANET IS LIFELESS.
ASSEMBLE A MEETING OF THE SENIOR STAFF IN THE BRIEFING ROOM. AND INCLUDE DR. PIERSON. SHE MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE.


AN AUTOMATED WEAPONS SYSTEM? BUILT BY WHO? THIS PLANET HAS NO LIFE-FORMS!
PERHAPS IT WAS SOMEHOW USED AGAINST THE PLANET'S NATIVES, DR MCCOY. THAT COULD EXPLAIN WHY A LIFELESS PLANET IS OTHERWISE CLASS "M" IN ALL RESPECTS.

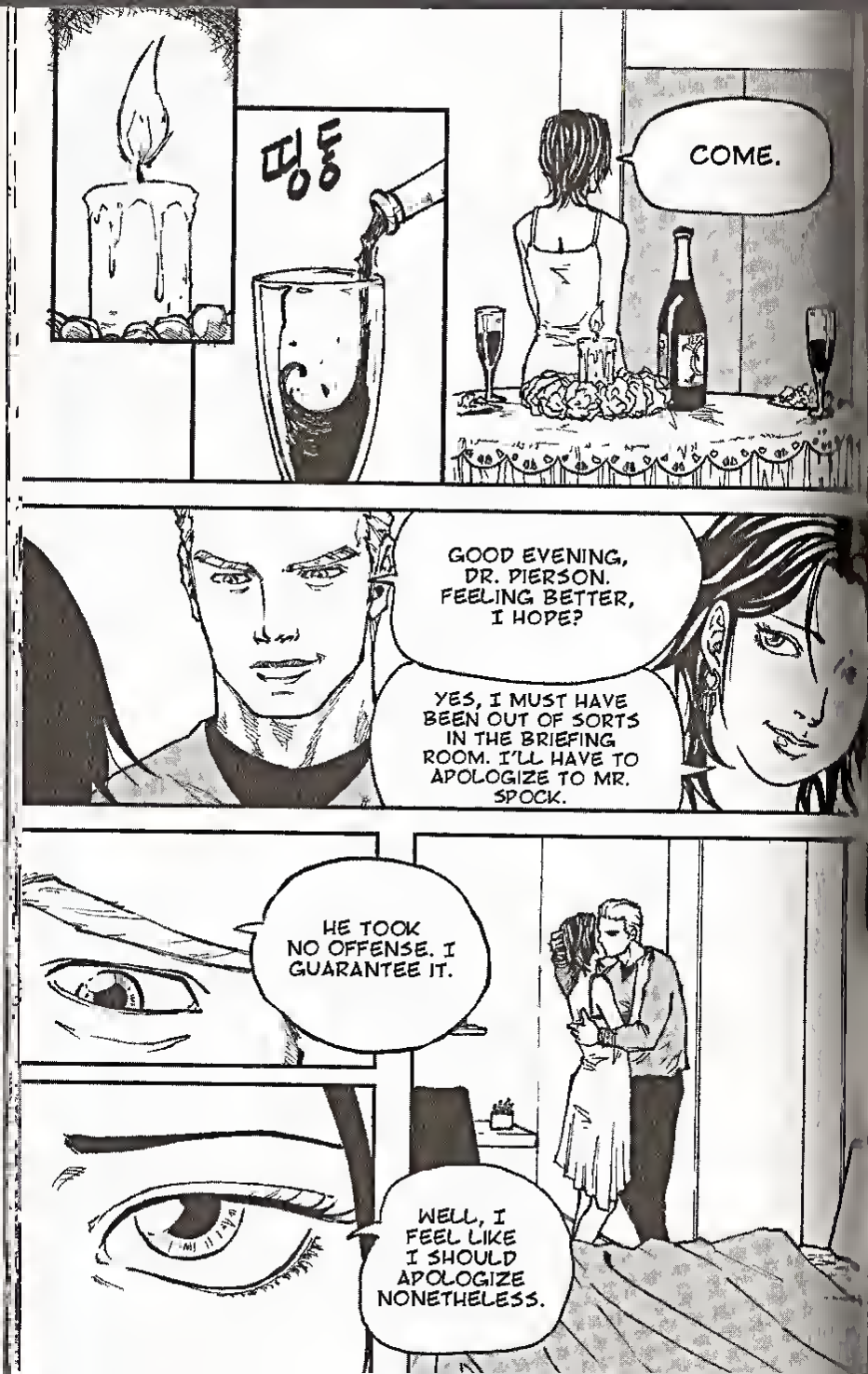
THE MISSLES WE ENCOUNTERED ORIGINATED FROM TWO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS ON THE PLANET'S SURFACE.
WE'LL TACKLE THIS PROBLEM FROM THE SOURCE--THE SITES THE MISSILES WERE FIRED FROM.


I'LL COMMAND ONE LANDING PARTY...
...SPOCK, YOU'LL TAKE THE OTHER.
싸삭

SOME KIND OF SARCOPHAGUS...? BUT METAL, AND HIGHLY ADVANCED...
THIS LANGUAGE IS LIKE NOTHING IN FEDERATION DATABASES.
덜컹

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL. THE SARCOPHAGI--IF THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE--HAVE BEEN BEAMED ABOARD THE ENTERPRISE FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION. THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER MISSILE ATTACKS.
EACH SARCOPHAGI IS EMITTING A LOW-LEVEL ENERGY WAVE, OF THE SAME FREQUENCY AS THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM OF THE MISSILES...
...WHICH MAY EXPLAIN WHY THE ATTACKS HAVE NOT RESUMED.
ARE YOU SUGGESTING A DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BODIES AND THE MISSILE ATTACKS, MR. SPOCK?
IT WOU SEEM ON LOGICAL, PIERSON BUT I WOU CAUTION
THERE'S NO NEED FOR CONDE-SCENSION, SPOCK! IF A WOMAN WERE IN CHARGE OF THIS INVESTI-GATION, SHE'D--
...PLEASE EXCUSE ME... I...I MUST BE OVERTIRED.

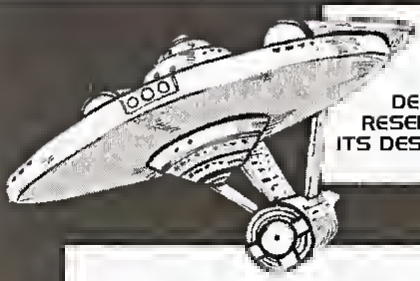
UHURA, HAVE YOU SENT THE LOG ENTRIES TO STARFLEET?
I'M PREPARING THEM RIGHT NOW, CAPTAIN.
WHAT THE--? RED ALERT! EMERGENCY LIGHTING!
BRIDGE CREW, ENVIRONMENTAL SUITS! IF THIS SPREADS--
HUH?
BELAY THAT LAST ORDER. KIRK TO ENGINEERING. MR. SCOTT, WHAT--
IF YOU'RE GOIN' T'ASK ME WHAT CAUSED THAT POWER FAILURE, CAPTAIN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YA! I'M RUNNIN' FULL DIAGNOSTICS!
ACKNOWLEDGED, SCOTTY. KEEP ME POSTED. KIRK OUT. SPOCK, YOU AND SCOTTY ATTACK THIS TOGETHER. I DON'T WANT IT HAPPENING AT A MORE CRUCIAL TIME.


띵동
COME.
GOOD EVENING, DR. PIERSON. FEELING BETTER, I HOPE?
YES, I MUST HAVE BEEN OUT OF SORTS IN THE BRIEFING ROOM. I'LL HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO MR. SPOCK.
HE TOOK NO OFFENSE. I GUARANTEE IT.
WELL, I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD APOLOGIZE NONETHELESS.

BLAST IT, PIERSON, I WON'T HAVE YOU HANGING ALL OVER ME, TRYING TO CONTROL ME, TO RUN MY LIFE--!
I COULD RUN IT BETTER THAN YOU RUN THIS STARSHIP, "CAPTAIN!" BUT WE'LL NEVER KNOW, WILL WE--?
W-WAIT, THIS IS WRONG...
삐!
KIRK HERE. GO AHEAD.
CAPTAIN, PLEASE REPORT TO CREW QUARTERS ON DECK SEVEN IMMEDIATELY.

"MRS. MARKHAM?" I WOULD BE BETTER OFF DEAD!
I CAN ARRANGE THAT, YOU SHREW--!
--NEVER KNOW YOUR PLACE--!
--ALWAYS TRYING TO HOLD ME BACK--!
--WISH YOU'D NEVER BEEN BORN --!

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL: INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN HAVE BROKEN OUT ALL OVER THE SHIP, WHICH IS CONTRIBUTING TO A MASSIVE BREAKDOWN OF COMMAND.



AND ENGINEER SCOTT REPORTS A POWER DRAIN THAT HAS BEGUN TO DEPLETE THE SHIP'S ENERGY RESERVES. ITS SOURCE--AND ITS DESTINATION--IS UNKNOWN.

I HAVE CALLED AN EMERGENCY MEETING WITH SOME OF THE SENIOR STAFF TO COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS TO OUR MOUNTING PROBLEMS.

SPOCK, BONES. EITHER THE SHIP WILL FALL *APART*, OR ITS CREW WILL TEAR EACH OTHER *APART!* WE NEED ANSWERS.

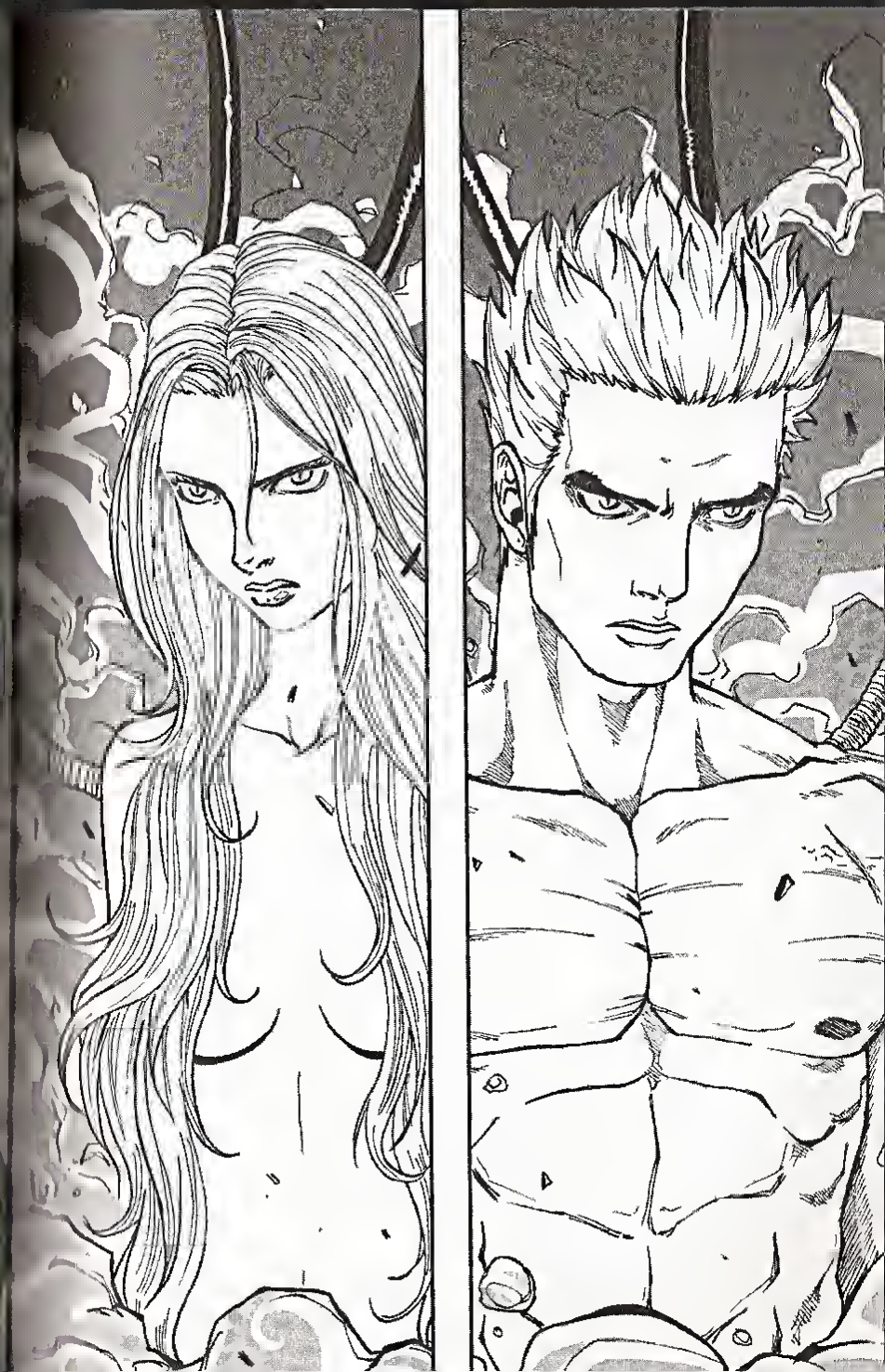
IT WOULD BE ILLOGICAL TO ASSUME THAT THE POWER DRAIN AND THE CURRENT TEMPERAMENT OF THE CREW WERE NOT RELATED IN SOME WAY TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE SARCOPHAGI.

I CAN WORK UP A NEURAL NEUTRALIZER THAT WILL LESSEN THE HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE MEN AND WOMEN, JIM, BUT THAT'S JUST A SYMPTOM.

YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT'S CAUSING IT? NO IDEA HOW TO COMBAT IT? RESIST IT?
NONE. BUT WE'D NEED TO FIND OUT QUICK. THAT NEUTRALIZER MIGHT NOT WORK FOR VERY LONG.
UNDERSTOOD. SCOTTY SAYS WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO BEAM THOSE SCARCOPHAGI BACK DOWN TO THE PLANET...SO WE'LL HAVE TO DO WHAT WE CAN HERE.
CAPTAIN, I WOULD REGRET THE WANTON DESTRUCTION OF TWO SUCH ARTIFACTS FROM AN UNKNOWN PEOPLE.
I UNDERSTAND THAT, SPOCK, BUT THE SAFETY OF THE SHIP AND ITS CREW COMES FIRST! UNTIL THIS SITUATION IS RESOLVED, I'M SEPARATING THE MALE CREW FROM THE FEMALE! MALES IN THE STARDRIVE SECTION, FEMALES IN THE SAUCER SECTION!

WHAT?! THAT'S THE PLAN THE GREAT CAPTAIN KIRK HAS COME UP WITH?
IF YOU HAVE A BETTER ONE, I'D BE GLAD TO HEAR IT--LIEUTENANT.
OH, I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA, MISTER! HOW ABOUT PUTTING THE WOMEN IN CHARGE? I COULD RUN THIS SHIP A DAMN SIGHT BETTER THAN THIS!
ENOUGH, UHURA, OR I WILL HAVE YOU THROWN INTO THE BRIG!

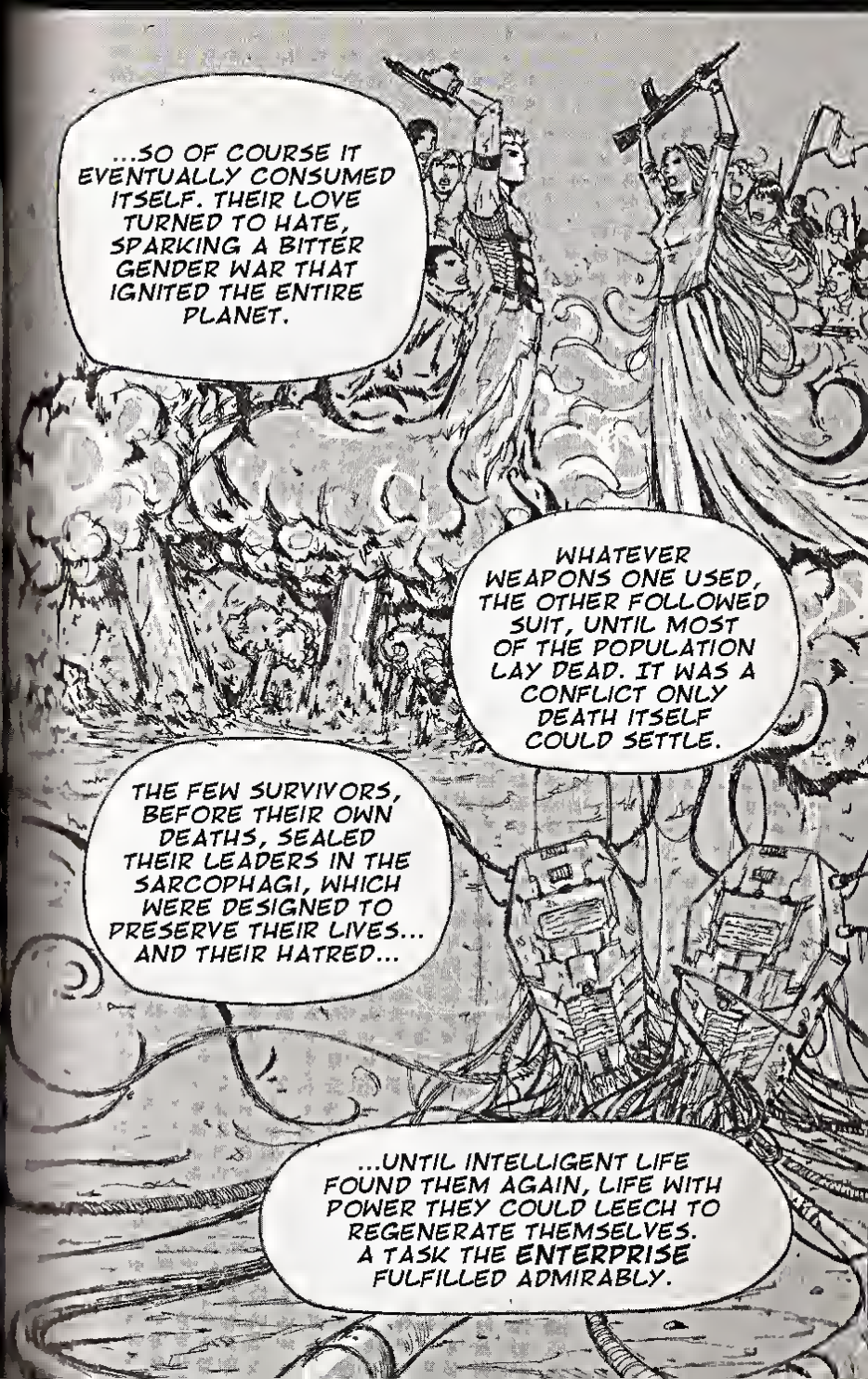
CAPTAIN'S LOG. SUPPLEMENTAL. MR SPOCK AND I ARE EXAMINING EACH SARCOPHA IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISABLE THE NOW THAT THE REST OF THE CREW HAS BEEN SEPARATED, I EXPECT NO FURTHER VIOLENCE.
KIRK TO SPOCK. THE MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY TEAM HAVE KILLED EACH OTHER.
SPOCK HERE, CAPTAIN. I HAVE FOUND THE SAME SITUATION HERE ON THE CARGO DECK.
ANY CHANGE IN THE SARCOPHAGUS--?
CAPTAIN? ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? JIM...?



JIM, IT'S MCCOY. WHERE ARE YOU?
I CAN'T RAISE SPOCK. HAVE YOU HEARD FROM HIM?
...B-BONES?
JIM? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'VE SET UP A MAKESHIFT SICKBAY IN THE BOTANICAL LAB. CAN YOU HEAR ME? JIM...?

FELLOW MALES, I AM FARON. I WILL LEAD YOU AGAINST THE DOMINATION OF WOMEN...
MY SISTERS, I AM NADIRA. I WILL FREE YOU FROM THE DOMINATION OF MEN...
...AND INTO FREEDOM...A FREEDOM THAT WILL MEAN SHAME AND DEGRADATION TO OUR ENEMIES!

HOW'S SPOCK?
CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL: THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO GET WORSE. THE TWO SECTIONS OF THE SHIP HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY TAKEN OVER BY THE TWO ALIENS ALONG WITH MOST OF MY OFFICERS.
I AM... SUBSTANTIALLY UNHARMED, CAPTAIN. I SUCCUMBED TO THE MALE'S TELEPATHIC ABILITIES, AS I AM SURE YOU DID TO THE FEMALE'S.
MY OWN MINOR TELEPATHIC ABILITY ALLOWED ME TO GLIMPSE BRIEFLY INTO HIS MIND.
THEIR NAMES ARE *FARON* AND *NADIRA*. THEY WERE ONCE MATES AND THE EQUAL RULERS OF THIS PLANET. THEIR LOVE WAS ALL-CONSUMING...


...SO OF COURSE IT EVENTUALLY CONSUMED ITSELF. THEIR LOVE TURNED TO HATE, SPARKING A BITTER GENDER WAR THAT IGNITED THE ENTIRE PLANET.
WHATEVER WEAPONS ONE USED, THE OTHER FOLLOWED SUIT, UNTIL MOST OF THE POPULATION LAY DEAD. IT WAS A CONFLICT ONLY DEATH ITSELF COULD SETTLE.
THE FEW SURVIVORS, BEFORE THEIR OWN DEATHS, SEALED THEIR LEADERS IN THE SARCOPHAGI, WHICH WERE DESIGNED TO PRESERVE THEIR LIVES... AND THEIR HATRED...
...UNTIL INTELLIGENT LIFE FOUND THEM AGAIN, LIFE WITH POWER THEY COULD LEECH TO REGENERATE THEMSELVES. A TASK THE ENTERPRISE FULFILLED ADMIRABLY.

I'M A DOCTOR, NOT AN ELECTRICIAN-- BUT THOSE COFFINS WE FOUND THEM IN ACTUALLY CONTAIN RESTORATIVE CIRCUITRY, DESIGNED TO REGENERATE THEIR BODIES.
ONCE REGENERATED, THEIR FORMIDABLE PSYCHIC POWERS ENABLED THEM TO REKINDLE THEIR BITTER GENDER WAR--
--USING MY CREW AS THEIR SOLDIERS. MCCOY, IS IT POSSIBLE TO INCAPACITATE THE ENTIRE CREW?
IF WE CAN GET TO THE AUXILIARY CONTROL CENTER IN THE SAUCER SECTION, I COULD FLOOD THE SHIP WITH THE INTRUDER CONTROL GAS. AS FOR US...
...THIS NEURAL NEUTRALIZER WILL LET US WITHSTAND THE EFFECTS OF FARON'S PSYCHIC WHAMMY--FOR A SHORT TIME, ANYWAY. I'VE GOT A SHOT FOR EACH OF US.
I WILL REQUIRE NONE, DOCTOR. NOW THAT I AM AWARE OF THEM, FARON'S PSYCHIC POWERS PRESENT NO CHALLENGE TO ME.

NO, YOU WON'T NEED ONE, SPOCK--BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
I APPLAUD YOUR HIPPOCRATIC INSTINCTS, DOCTOR, BUT THE CAPTAIN REQUIRES MY SERVICES.
I ALMOST HATE TO ADMIT IT, BONES... DON'T WORRY, DOCTOR. I WON'T LET HIM DO ANYTHING STRENUOUS.
WHAT, LIKE SMILE?

HOW LONG WILL THE GAS WORK?
ON THE ENTERPRISE CREW, MAYBE A FEW HOURS.
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO SPECULATE HOW IT WILL EFFECT THOSE TWO ZOMBIES.
EXCUSE ME, NURSE CHAPEL? WHY AREN'T YOU WITH--
I TOOK AN OATH JUST LIKE YOU, CAPTAIN. AND MY PATIENTS NEED ME.

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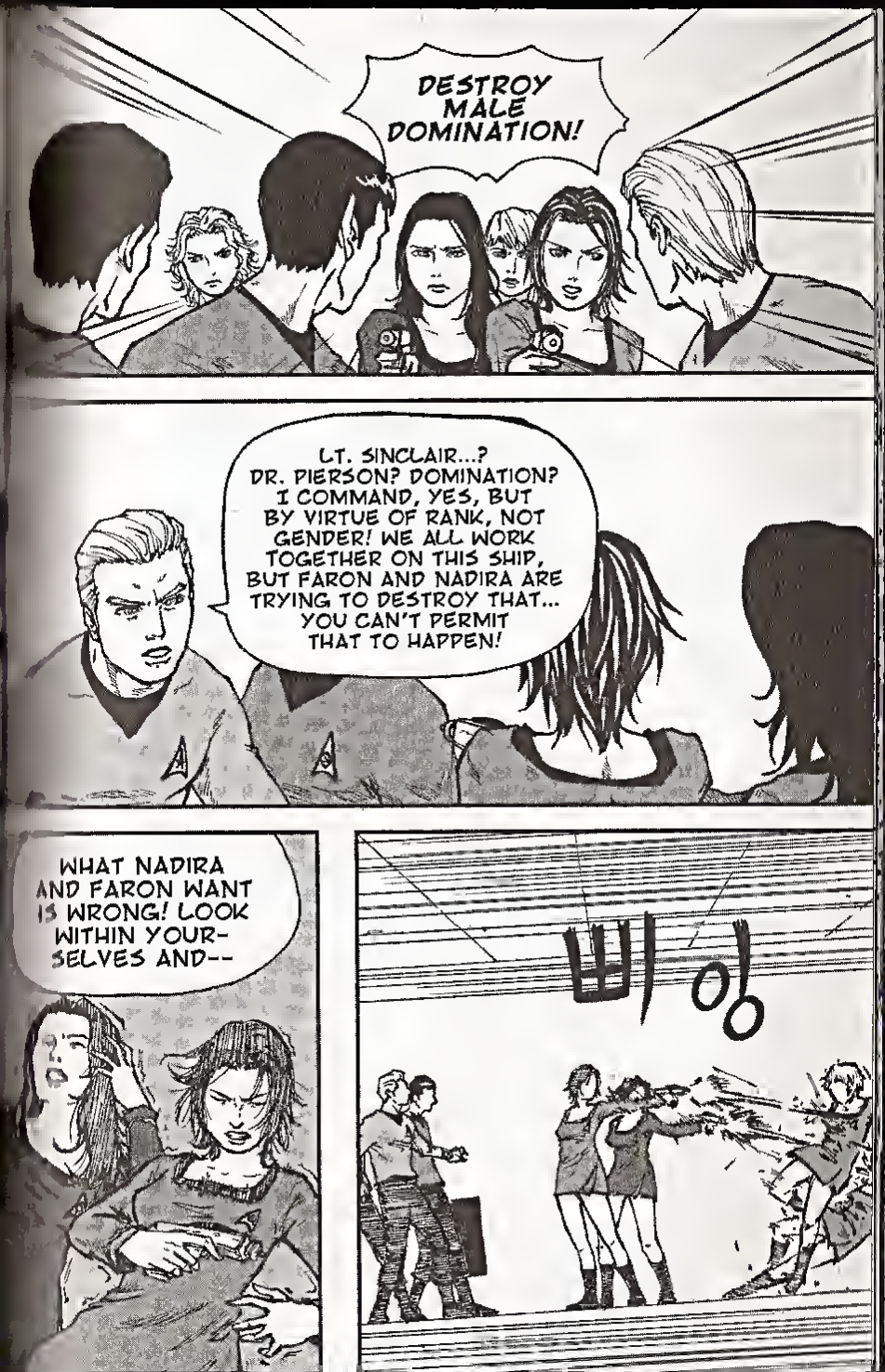
GAS! TYPICAL MALE TREACHERY! SISTER UHURA! CLOSE THE VENTS AND SEND A TEAM TO IT'S SOURCE.
YES, SISTER NADIRA!
THEY WERE ABLE TO OVERRIDE OUR SECURITY CODES, WHICH PROBABLY MEANS THAT THEY KNOW WE'RE--


DESTROY MALE DOMINATION!
LT. SINCLAIR...? DR. PIERSON? DOMINATION? I COMMAND, YES, BUT BY VIRTUE OF RANK, NOT GENDER! WE ALL WORK TOGETHER ON THIS SHIP, BUT FARON AND NADIRA ARE TRYING TO DESTROY THAT... YOU CAN'T PERMIT THAT TO HAPPEN!
WHAT NADIRA AND FARON WANT IS WRONG! LOOK WITHIN YOURSELVES AND--
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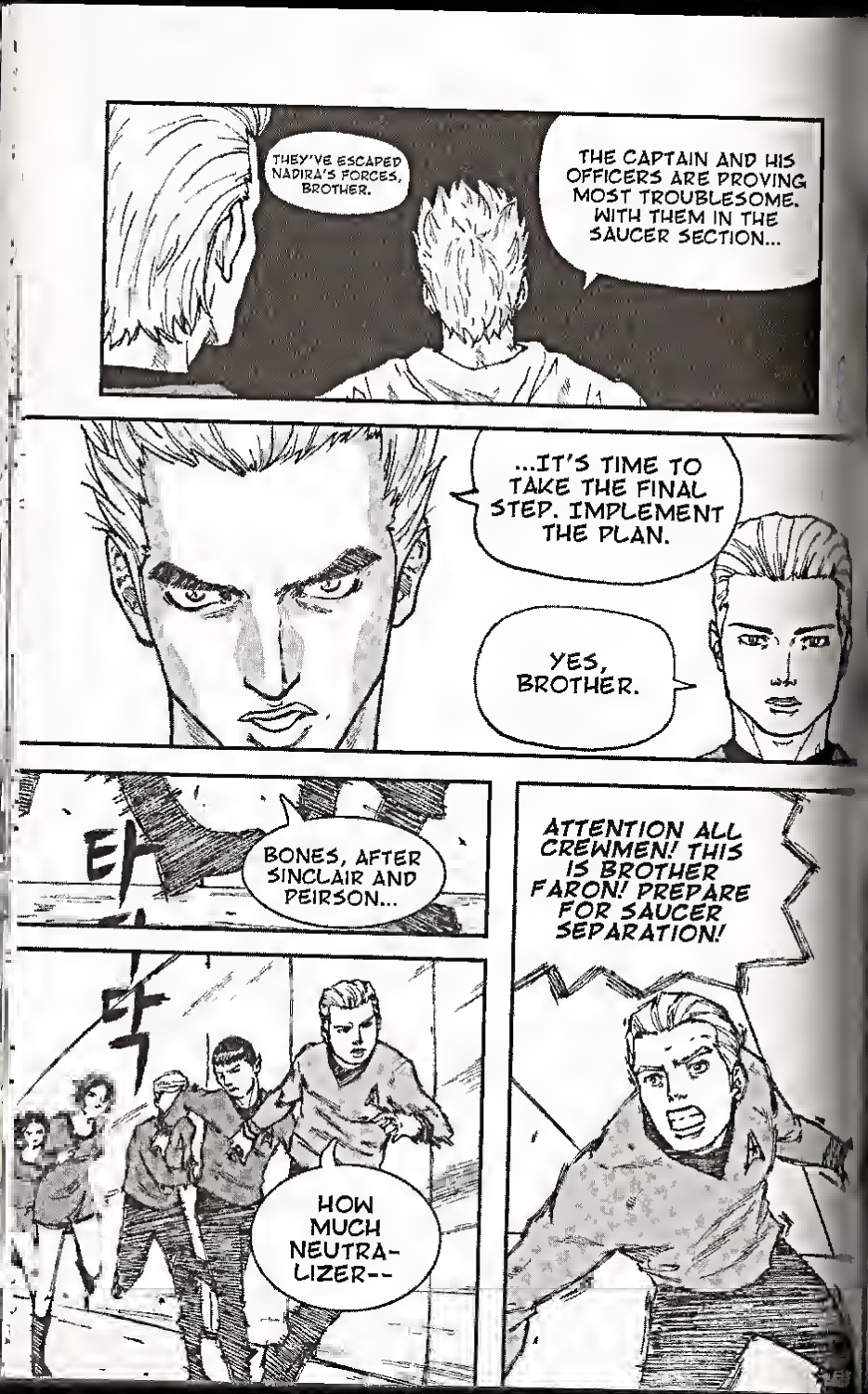
THEY'VE ESCAPED NADIRA'S FORCES, BROTHER.
THE CAPTAIN AND HIS OFFICERS ARE PROVING MOST TROUBLESOME. WITH THEM IN THE SAUCER SECTION...
...IT'S TIME TO TAKE THE FINAL STEP. IMPLEMENT THE PLAN.
YES, BROTHER.
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BONES, AFTER SINCLAIR AND PEIRSON...
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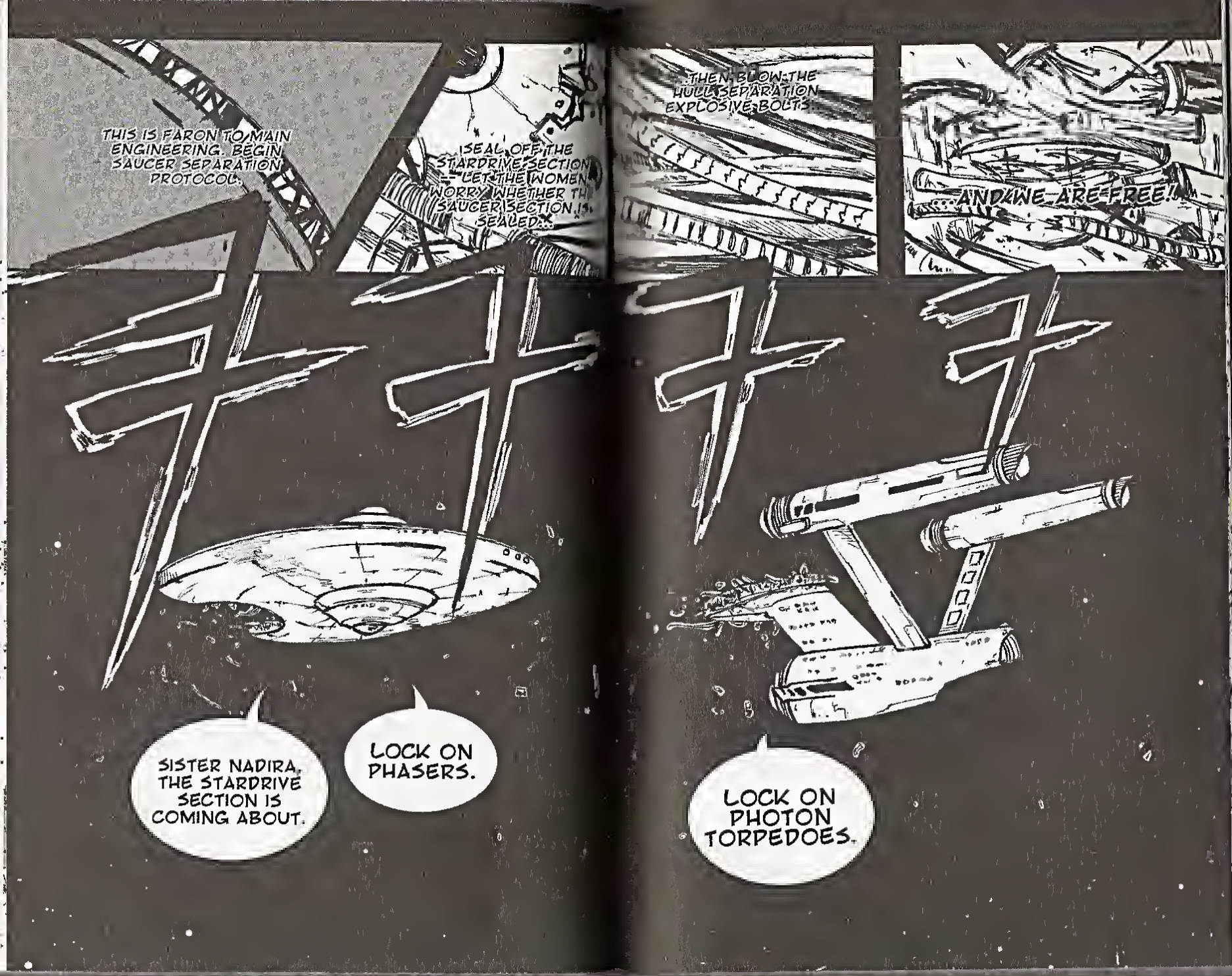
HOW MUCH NEUTRA-LIZER--
ATTENTION ALL CREWMEN! THIS IS BROTHER FARON! PREPARE FOR SAUCER SEPARATION!

NOW WE'RE IN IT FOR SURE! WITH THE SHIP SEPARATED--
--FARON CONTROLS WARP DRIVE AND PHOTON TORPEDOES! HE'LL BE ABLE TO DESTROY NADIRA-- AND HALF MY CREW WITH HER!
BLAST IT, THIS IS LIKE EVERY OTHER WAR THAT'S EVER BEEN FOUGHT! GENERALS SIT BEHIND THE LINES AND COMMAND THE TROOPS TO DIE!
IF ONLY THE GENERALS COULD BE BROUGHT FACE-TO-FACE, THEY'D KNOW WHAT IT COST TO--
WHAT IS IT, JIM?
THAT, DOCTOR, MAY BE THE BEST PRESCRIPTION YOU'VE WRITTEN YET!


THIS IS FARON TO MAIN ENGINEERING. BEGIN SAUCER SEPARATION PROTOCOL.
SEAL OFF THE STARDRIVE SECTION — LET THE WOMEN WORRY WHETHER THE SAUCER SECTION IS SEALED...
...THEN BLOW THE HULL SEPARATION EXPLOSIVE BOLTS...
...AND WE ARE FREE!
SISTER NADIRA, THE STARDRIVE SECTION IS COMING ABOUT.
LOCK ON PHASERS.
LOCK ON PHOTON TORPEDOES.

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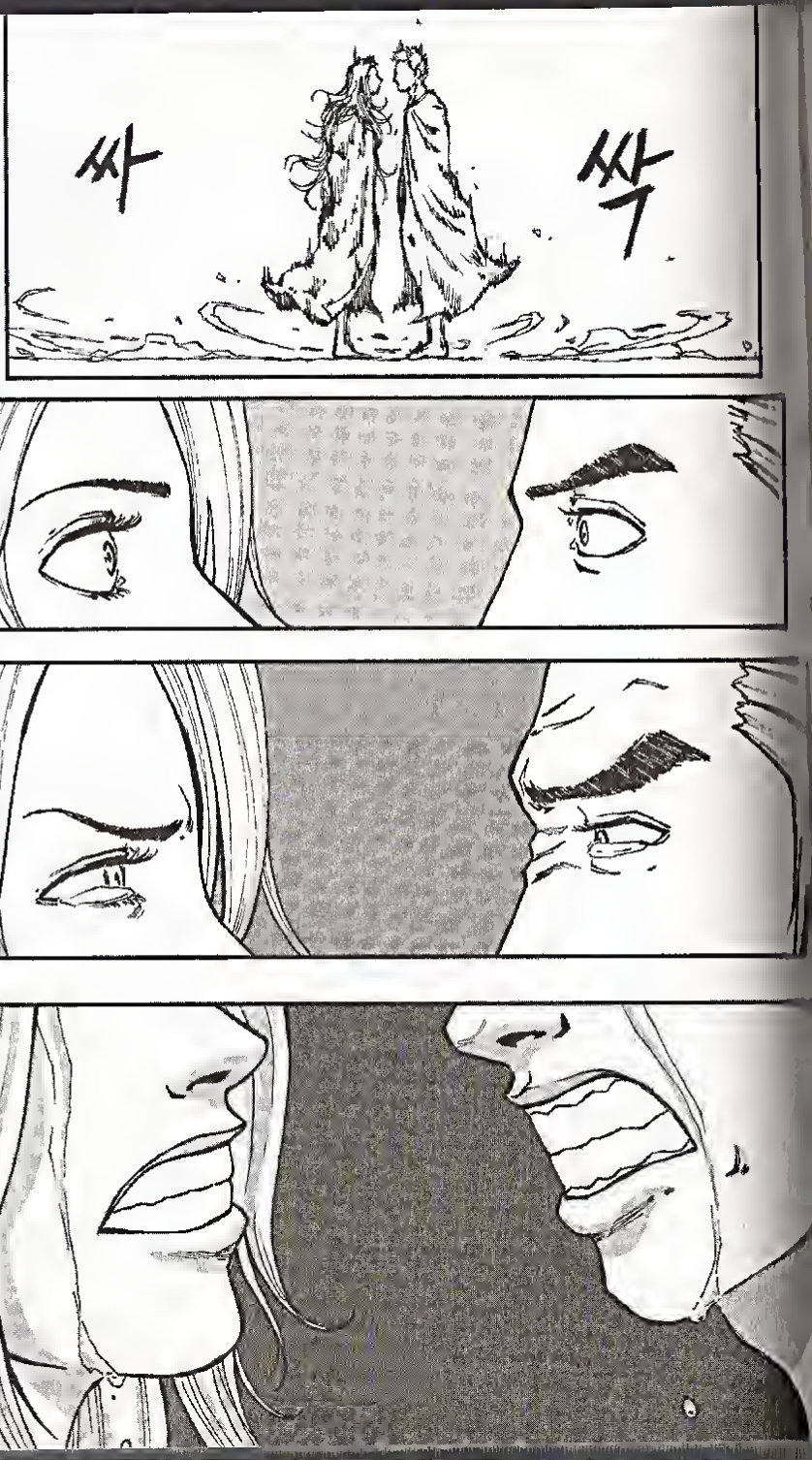
PROCEED, CAPTAIN. I WILL OCCUPY THEM.
JIM, WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE SPOCK!
IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE OF SAVING THE SHIP, WE HAVE TO GET TO THE TRANSPORTER ROOM!

THE MEN WILL FALL TO OUR MIGHT!
VICTORY OVER THE WOMEN WILL BE OURS!
JIM! WE CAN'T HOLD THEM OFF MUCH LONGER!
FIRE!
FIRE!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FARON!
NADIRA!
퍼억
지잭

ALL STATIONS REPORTING, REPAIRS ARE UNDERWAY.
MAYBE SPOCK IS RIGHT, JIM. MAYBE OUR EMOTIONS WILL KILL US ALL IN THE END.
EXCELLENT POINT, DOCTOR. HOWEVER, OUR EMOTIONS ARE ALSO WHAT GIVE US STRENGTH IN THE FACE OF DANGER... GIVE US JOY IN TIMES OF PEACE...
AND NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I BELIEVE DR. PIERSON IS WAITING FOR ME IN THE ARBORETUM.
MR. SPOCK, YOU HAVE THE CONN.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 3378.7. SCIENCE OFFICER SPOCK REPORTING: THE ENTERPRISE IS MAKING ITS WAY TO A RENDEZVOUS WITH TECHNICIANS FROM STARBASE 13, WHERE THE TWO SECTIONS OF THE SHIP WILL BE REJOINED.

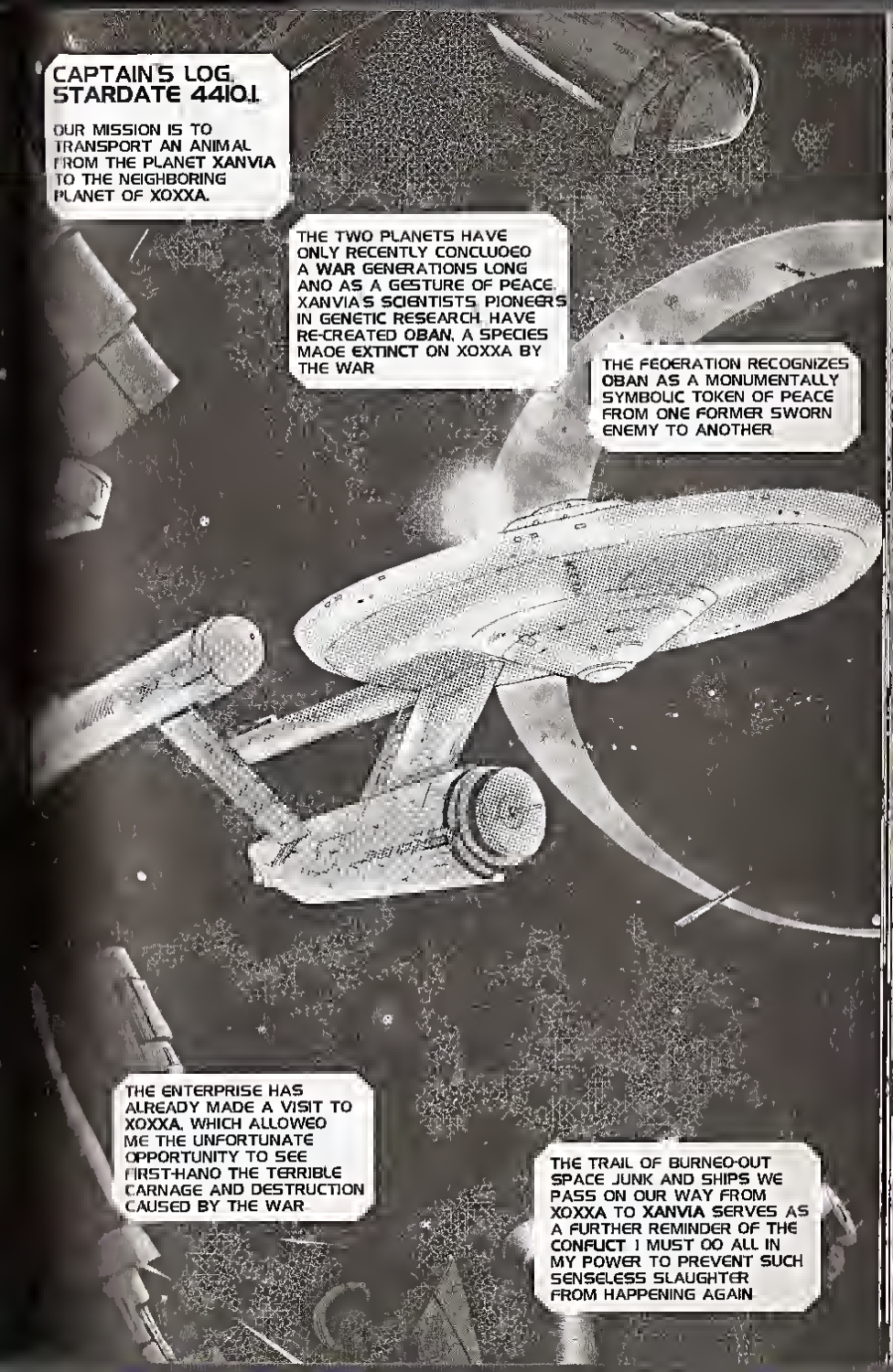
DESPITE OUR EXPERIENCE, WE WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN LEARNING THE NAME OF THE PLANET ON WHICH WE FOUND FARON AND NADIRA.

HOWEVER, IF EARTH LEGENDS CAN BE CONSIDERED AT ALL A REFLECTION OF OUR UNIVERSE...

...I SUBMIT THIS PLANET'S NAME WAS NOT EDEN.

OBAN

STORY BY JIM ALEXANDER
ART BY MICHAEL SHELFER

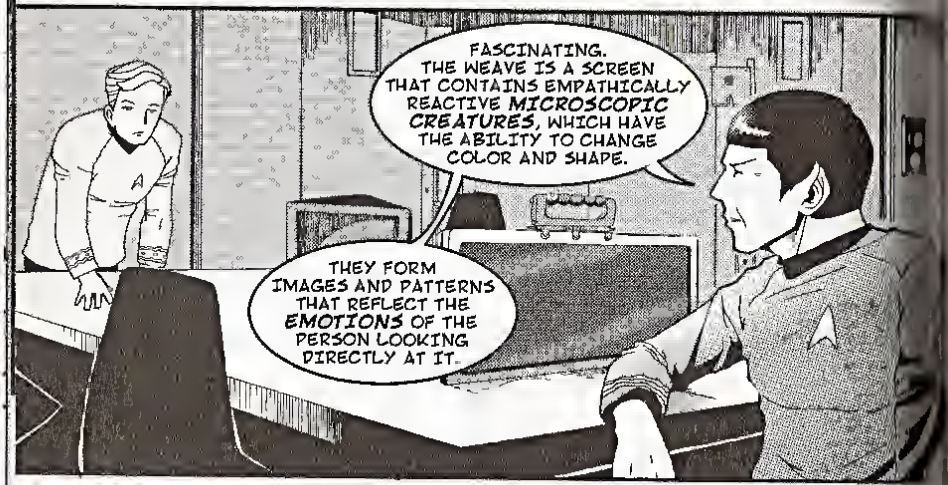

CAPTAIN'S LOG. STARDATE 44101.
OUR MISSION IS TO TRANSPORT AN ANIMAL FROM THE PLANET XANVIA TO THE NEIGHBORING PLANET OF XOXXA.
THE TWO PLANETS HAVE ONLY RECENTLY CONCLUDED A WAR GENERATIONS LONG AND AS A GESTURE OF PEACE, XANVIA'S SCIENTISTS, PIONEERS IN GENETIC RESEARCH, HAVE RE-CREATED OBAN, A SPECIES MADE EXTINCT ON XOXXA BY THE WAR.
THE FEDERATION RECOGNIZES OBAN AS A MONUMENTALLY SYMBOLIC TOKEN OF PEACE FROM ONE FORMER SWORN ENEMY TO ANOTHER.
THE ENTERPRISE HAS ALREADY MADE A VISIT TO XOXXA, WHICH ALLOWED ME THE UNFORTUNATE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE FIRST-HAND THE TERRIBLE CARNAGE AND DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY THE WAR.
THE TRAIL OF BURNED-OUT SPACE JUNK AND SHIPS WE PASS ON OUR WAY FROM XOXXA TO XANVIA SERVES AS A FURTHER REMINDER OF THE CONFLICT I MUST DO ALL IN MY POWER TO PREVENT SUCH SENSELESS SLAUGHTER FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.

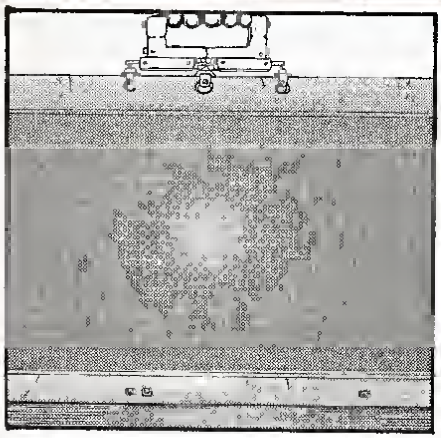
BEAMING DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE, MY CREW AND I ARE ACUTELY AWARE THAT WE MUST DEMONSTRATE DIPLOMACY AND EVEN-HANDEDNESS AT ALL TIMES.
AMBASSADOR KASAN, I OFFER YOU THE GREATEST OF REGARDS FROM CAPTAIN, CREW, AND FEDERATION.
THE HIGHEST OF REGARDS TO YOU, CAPTAIN KIRK, FROM THE PEOPLE OF XANVIA.
ARE YOU READY TO UPLIFT OUR GIFT OF PLANETARY PEACE?
YOUR SHIP'S DOCTOR HAS ALREADY EXAMINED THE BEAST.

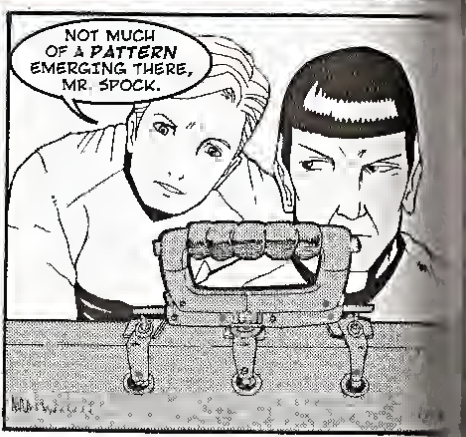
AND I CAN GIVE THE 'BEAST' A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH, CAPTAIN. THE ANIMAL POSES NO THREAT WHATSOEVER TO HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY.
IN FACT...
...CUTE LI'L CRITTER, AIN'T HE?
PURROOO

MEANWHILE...
WHAT DID YA SAY? YOU TRY AN' SAY THAT AGAIN!
IS THAT RIGHT? I'LL SAY IT AGAIN!
ANDREWS! STEELE! C'MON NOW, BREAK IT UP!
LATER...
I HEAR THERE WAS A DISTURBANCE IN ENGINEERING, SCOTTY.
ANDREWS LIKENED STEELE'S BREATH TO THAT OF A KLINGON. ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER
ACH, I SENT THEM AWAY TO COOL DOWN FOR A SPELL. TEMPERS ARE FRAYED, CAPTAIN.
WE WERE ALL PROMISED SHORE LEAVE WEEKS AGO.
I AM WELL AWARE, CHIEF ENGINEER, THAT THE CREW IS DUE SOME MUCH NEEDED R & R. BUT RIGHT NOW OUR ORDERS ARE TO DELIVER THE OBAN TO XOXXA.
DO THE BEST YOU CAN, SCOTT KIRK OUT

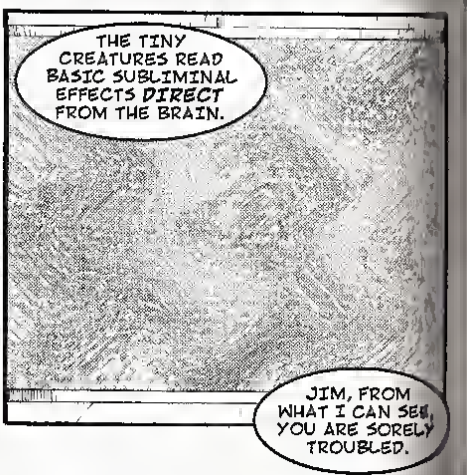
CAPTAIN, INCOMING TRANSMISSION FROM PRESIDENT BALLAL OF XOXXA.
PUT HIM THROUGH, UHURA.
AH, CAPTAIN, I CANNOT BEGIN TO DESCRIBE THE MAGNITUDE OF EXCITEMENT SWEEPING THROUGH MY PLANET AS WE PREPARE FOR YOUR RETURN AND THE ARRIVAL OF OBAN.
THE MOST SACRED OF BEASTS.
ALSO, CAPTAIN, YOU WILL FORGIVE MY ASKING, IS THE XOXXAN OFFERING TO YOUR SHIP FROM OUR EARLIER BRIEF MEETING, THE WEAVE, WELL KEPT?
MAY YOU AND YOUR CREW TAKE FROM IT GREAT SELF-ENLIGHTEN-MENT.
MY THANKS, PRESIDENT. I AM TOLD THAT THE WEAVE HAS FASCINATED MORE THAN ONE MEMBER OF OUR CREW.
AND REST ASSURED, THE WEAVE OUTSIDE VIEWING TIMES IS PROTECTED BY FORCE FIELD.
ALSO, I CAN CONFIRM WE WILL REACH XOXXAN ORBIT IN TWO DAYS TIME.
CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL. AFTER CONCLUDING WITH THE XOXXAN PRESIDENT, I DECIDE FINALLY TO CHECK THIS WEAVE OUT FOR MYSELF.


FASCINATING. THE WEAVE IS A SCREEN THAT CONTAINS EMPATHICALLY REACTIVE MICROSCOPIC CREATURES, WHICH HAVE THE ABILITY TO CHANGE COLOR AND SHAPE.
THEY FORM IMAGES AND PATTERNS THAT REFLECT THE EMOTIONS OF THE PERSON LOOKING DIRECTLY AT IT.



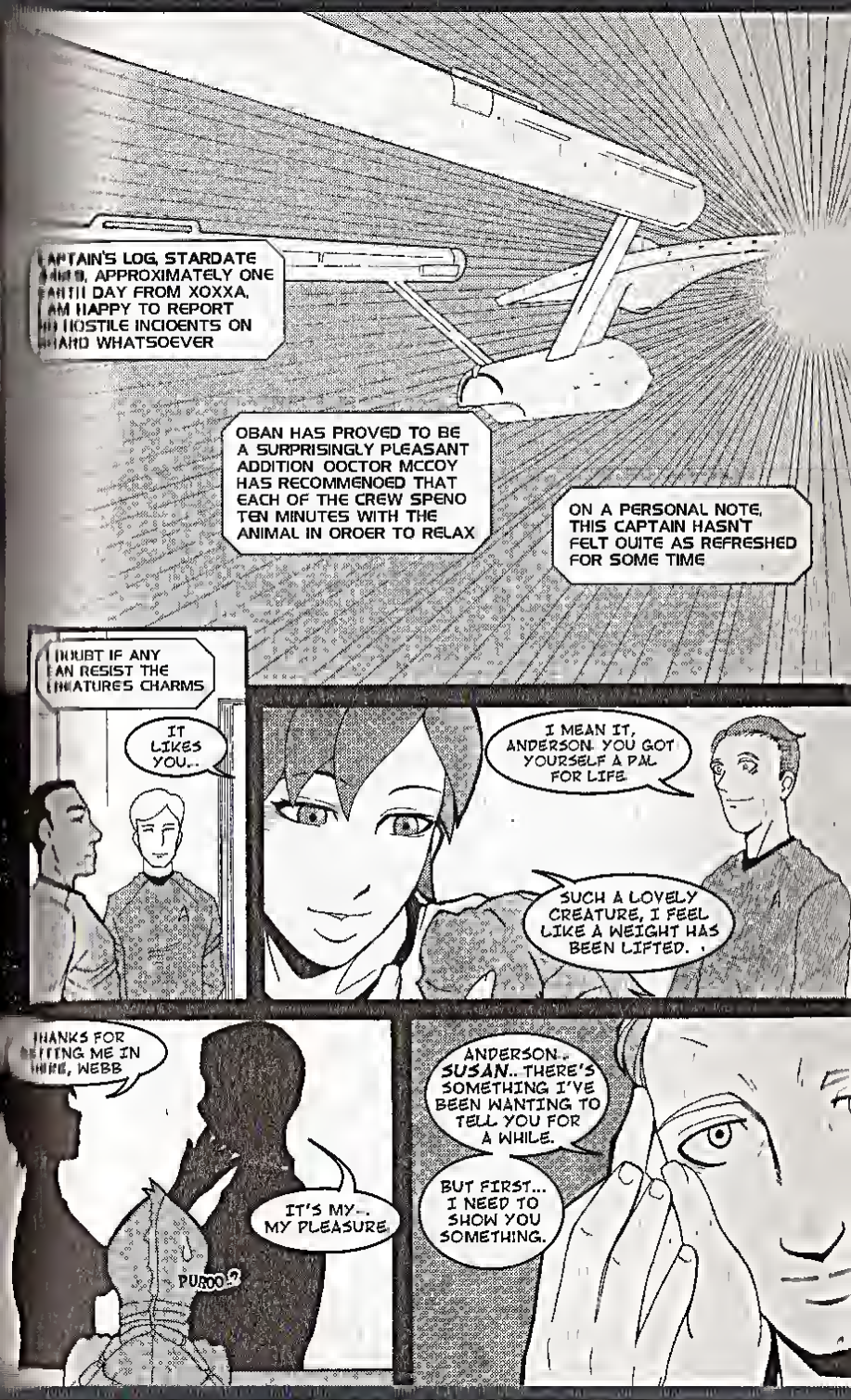

NOT MUCH OF A PATTERN EMERGING THERE, MR. SPOCK.

OF COURSE, CAPTAIN. I HAVE NO STRONG EMOTIONS FOR THE WEAVE TO REFLECT. PERHAPS IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TRY.
HMPH

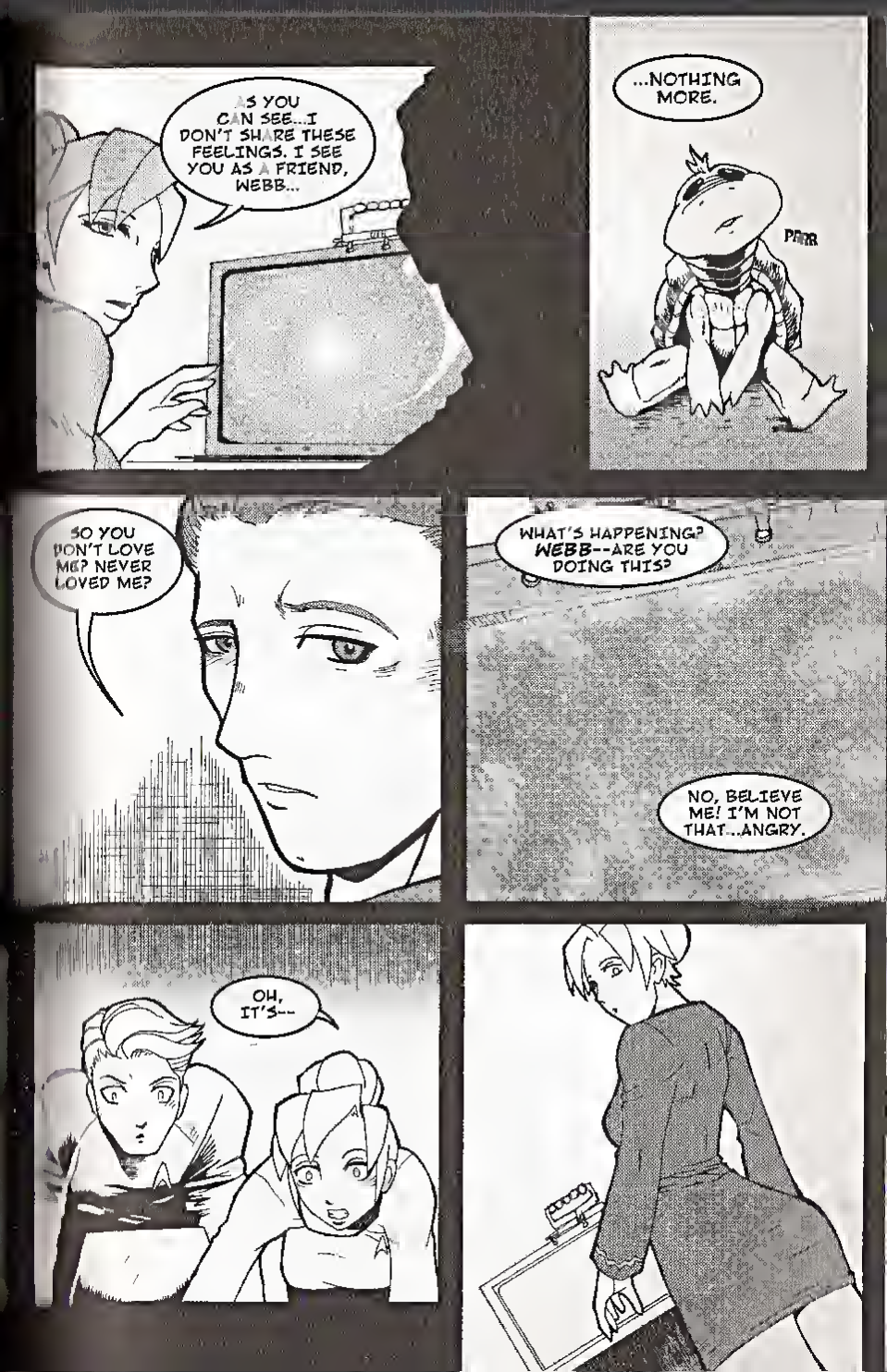

THE TINY CREATURES READ BASIC SUBLIMINAL EFFECTS DIRECT FROM THE BRAIN.
JIM, FROM WHAT I CAN SEE, YOU ARE SORELY TROUBLED.

I HAVE THE XANVIANS ON ONE SIDE, THE XOXXANS ON THE OTHER. THE DELICATE THREAD OF PEACE SITS SQUARELY ON MY SHOULDERS.
AND MY CREW GROWS EVER RESTLESS, CONTINUALLY DENIED SHORE LEAVE PROMISED THEM ALMOST A MONTH AGO.
AND THE WEAVE EMPATHIZES, CAPTAIN!
CALLING THE CAPTAIN.
MCCOY-- KIRK HERE.
AH, JUST THE MAN. YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUESTED IN OBAN'S QUARTERS..

"..THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE."
SIR...
AS YOU WERE, MEN.
DID I SEE RIGHT? WASN'T THAT ENGINEERS ANDREWS AND STEELE, NOT TWO HOURS AGO AT LOGGERHEADS WITH EACH OTHER?
THE SAME.
NOW LET ME SHOW YOU THE REASON.
OBAN? OUR CARGO?
THIS LITTLE GUY EMITS VERY SUBTLE BUT RELAXING PHEROMONES WHEN IT PURRS.
PURROOO
YOU KNOW, DOCTOR, I FEEL BETTER ALREADY.

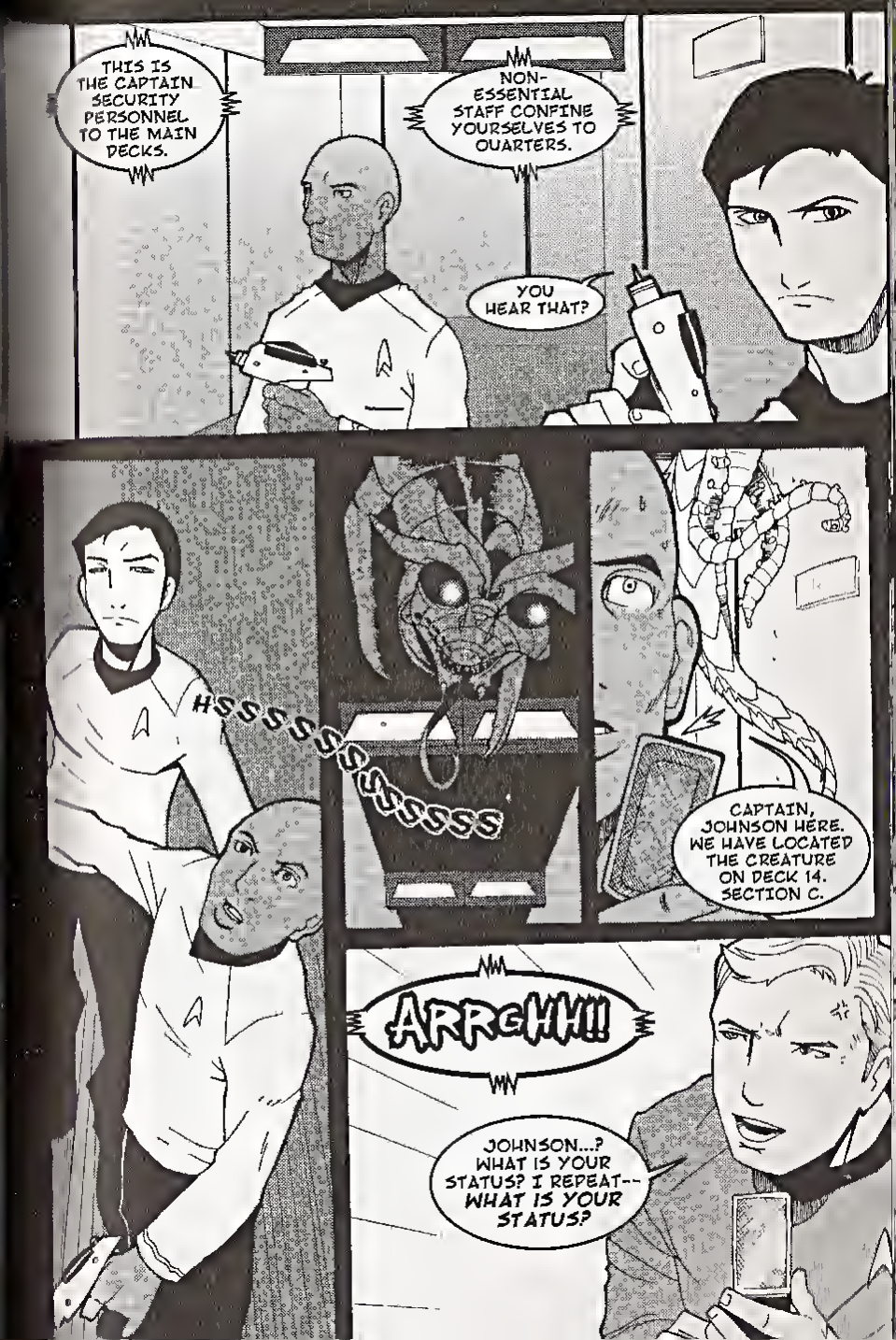

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE [illegible], APPROXIMATELY ONE EARTH DAY FROM XOXXA. I AM HAPPY TO REPORT NO HOSTILE INCIDENTS ON BOARD WHATSOEVER
OBAN HAS PROVED TO BE A SURPRISINGLY PLEASANT ADDITION DOCTOR MCCOY HAS RECOMMENDED THAT EACH OF THE CREW SPEND TEN MINUTES WITH THE ANIMAL IN ORDER TO RELAX
ON A PERSONAL NOTE, THIS CAPTAIN HASN'T FELT QUITE AS REFRESHED FOR SOME TIME
I DOUBT IF ANY CAN RESIST THE CREATURES CHARMS
IT LIKES YOU..
I MEAN IT, ANDERSON. YOU GOT YOURSELF A PAL FOR LIFE.
SUCH A LOVELY CREATURE, I FEEL LIKE A WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED.
THANKS FOR LETTING ME IN HERE, WEBB
IT'S MY-- MY PLEASURE.
PURR..?
ANDERSON.. SUSAN.. THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WANTING TO TELL YOU FOR A WHILE.
BUT FIRST... I NEED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

PROOL?
OKAY, WEBB. WHAT?
THE FORCE FIELD GOES UP AT 1900 HOURS. LET'S GO.
PURROO
YOU'LL LOVE IT SUSAN, I GUARANTEE IT. IT'S CALLED...
"...THE WEAVE."
IT REFLECTS YOUR INNER FEELINGS AND MINE ARE OF LOVE, PURE UNREQUITED LOVE--
UNREQUITED THAT IS, I HOPE, UNTIL NOW.
I... I'M NOT SURE


AS YOU CAN SEE...I DON'T SHARE THESE FEELINGS. I SEE YOU AS A FRIEND, WEBB...
...NOTHING MORE.
PFFFR
SO YOU DON'T LOVE ME? NEVER LOVED ME?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WEBB--ARE YOU DOING THIS?
NO, BELIEVE ME! I'M NOT THAT...ANGRY.
OH, IT'S--

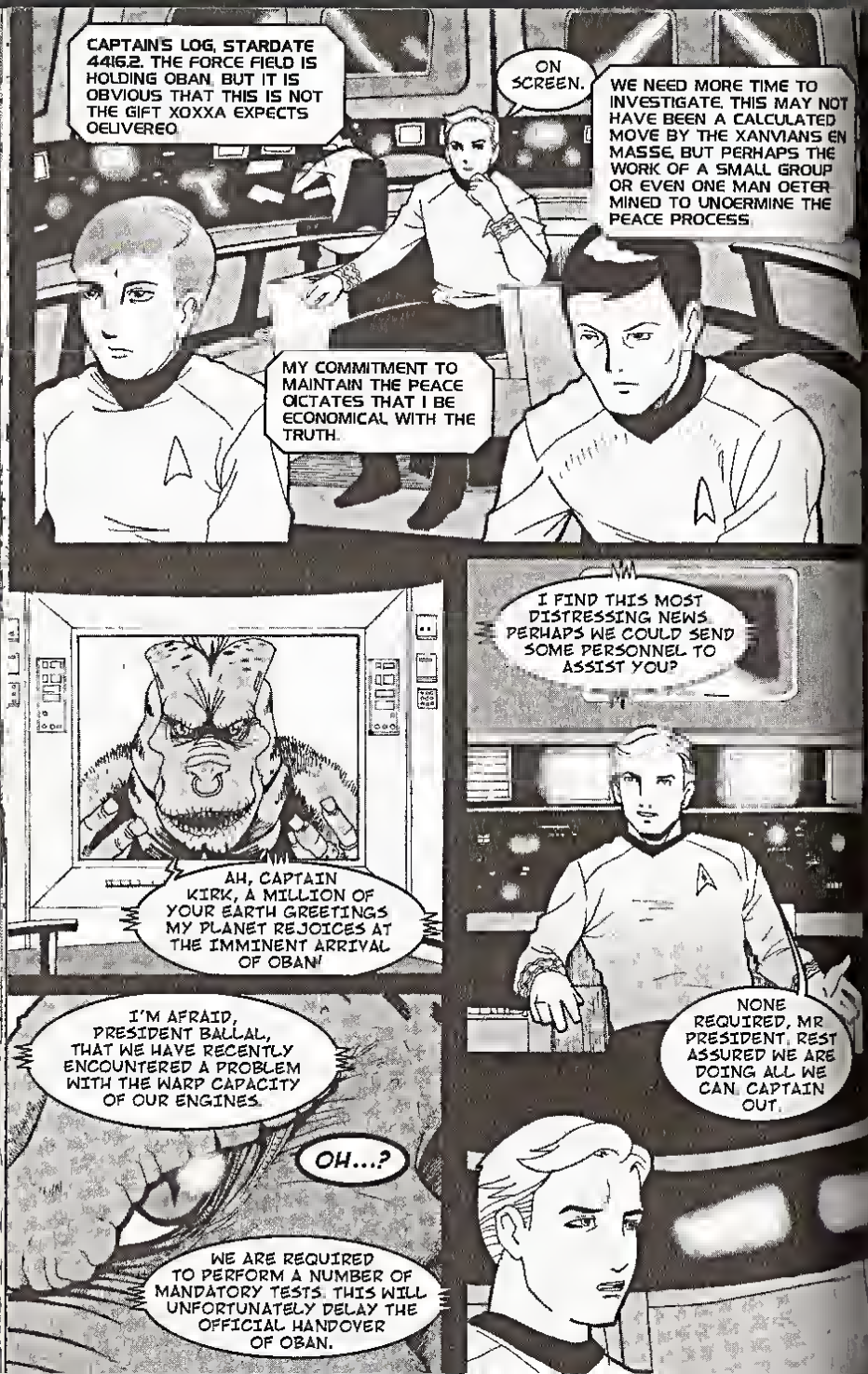
Aaaahhh!

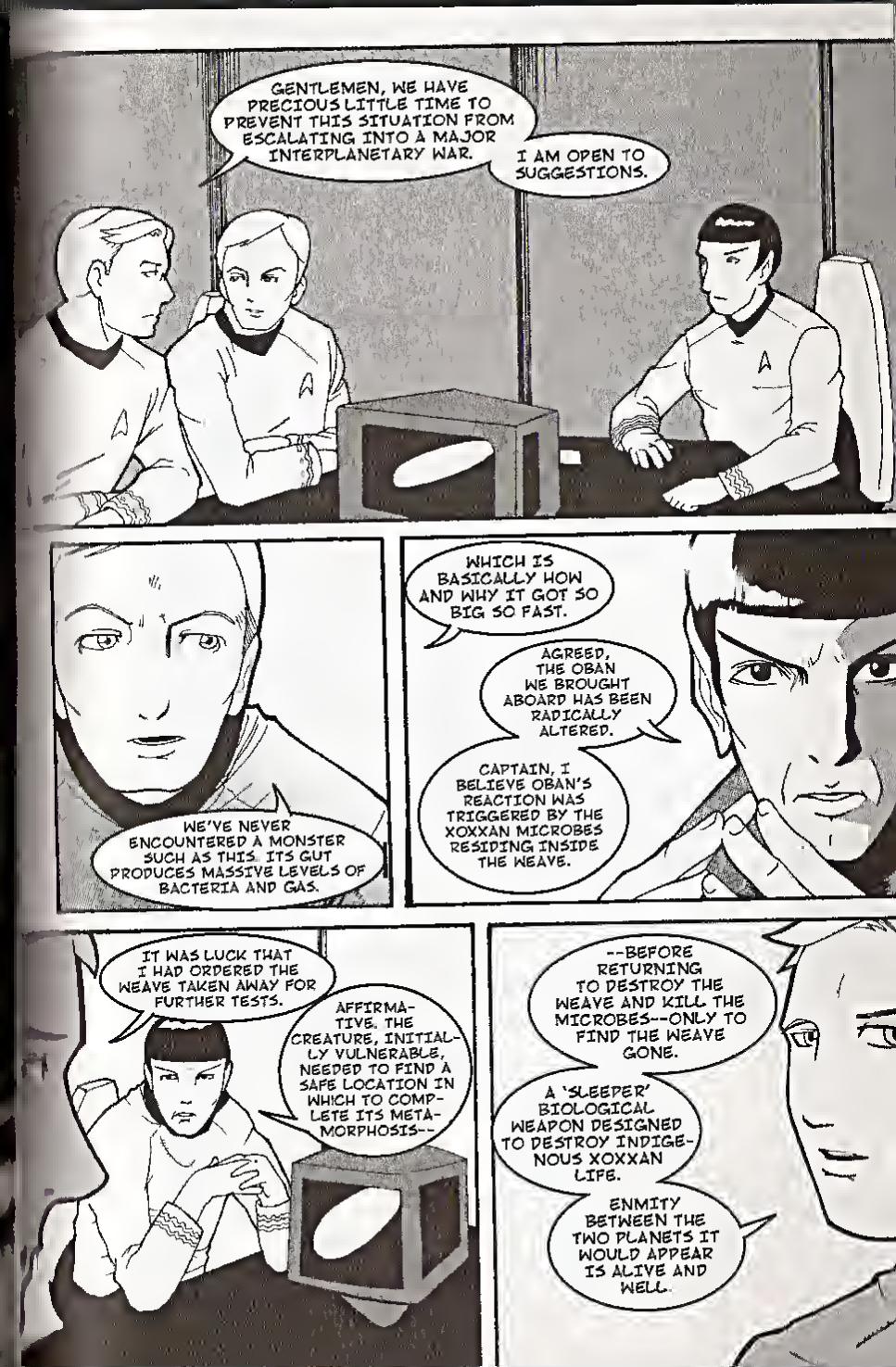
SO WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE CUTE LITTLE CREATURE WHOSE CHARMS NO ONE COULD RESIST?
IT WAS HORRIBLE.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS A TRICK OF THE LIGHT. ONE MOMENT, IT LOOKED SO.. FAMILIAR.
BUT THEN THE NEXT, THRASHING TENTACLES AND ITS BODY STRETCHING HORRIBLY, GROWING SO QUICKLY...AND ITS FACE--
MAKE SURE YOU BOTH GET SOME REST.
SPOCK, YOUR ANALYSIS.
THE OBAN DID INDEED ENTER THIS ROOM, BUT I CANNOT SAY WHAT TYPE OF CREATURE LEFT.
IT WOULD SEEM THAT A VIOLENT SHIFT IN OBAN'S METABOLISM
...WAS TRIGGERED BY THE WEAVE.


THIS IS THE CAPTAIN SECURITY PERSONNEL TO THE MAIN DECKS.
NON-ESSENTIAL STAFF CONFINE YOURSELVES TO QUARTERS.
YOU HEAR THAT?
HSSSSSSSSSSSS
CAPTAIN, JOHNSON HERE. WE HAVE LOCATED THE CREATURE ON DECK 14. SECTION C.
ARRGHH!!
JOHNSON...? WHAT IS YOUR STATUS? I REPEAT-- WHAT IS YOUR STATUS?

JOHNSON IS DEAD, CAPTAIN--AS IS CLARK!
HSSSSSSSSSSS
AIGGHEE!
KREEE...!

SLLLLLTH
BEEP!
KRAGSSSSSSS
HSSSSSSH
KRHHEEE!
SPAZ!


CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 44162. THE FORCE FIELD IS HOLDING OBAN, BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THIS IS NOT THE GIFT XOXXA EXPECTS DELIVERED.
ON SCREEN.
WE NEED MORE TIME TO INVESTIGATE. THIS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN A CALCULATED MOVE BY THE XANVIANS EN MASSE, BUT PERHAPS THE WORK OF A SMALL GROUP OR EVEN ONE MAN DETERMINED TO UNDERMINE THE PEACE PROCESS.
MY COMMITMENT TO MAINTAIN THE PEACE DICTATES THAT I BE ECONOMICAL WITH THE TRUTH.
I FIND THIS MOST DISTRESSING NEWS. PERHAPS WE COULD SEND SOME PERSONNEL TO ASSIST YOU?
AH, CAPTAIN KIRK, A MILLION OF YOUR EARTH GREETINGS. MY PLANET REJOICES AT THE IMMINENT ARRIVAL OF OBAN!
NONE REQUIRED, MR PRESIDENT. REST ASSURED WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN. CAPTAIN OUT.
I'M AFRAID, PRESIDENT BALLAL, THAT WE HAVE RECENTLY ENCOUNTERED A PROBLEM WITH THE WARP CAPACITY OF OUR ENGINES.
OH...?
WE ARE REQUIRED TO PERFORM A NUMBER OF MANDATORY TESTS. THIS WILL UNFORTUNATELY DELAY THE OFFICIAL HANDOVER OF OBAN.

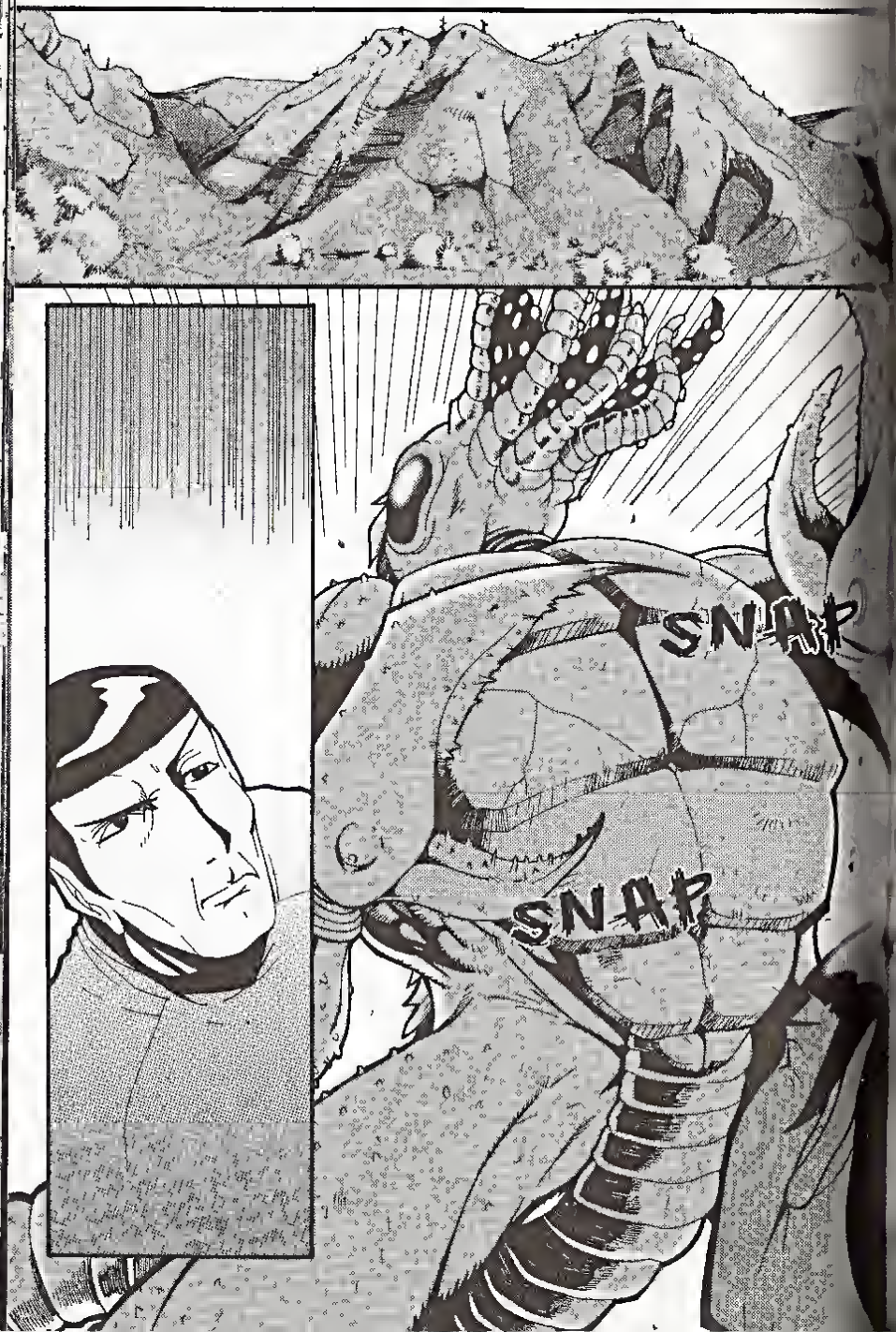

GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO PREVENT THIS SITUATION FROM ESCALATING INTO A MAJOR INTERPLANETARY WAR.
I AM OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS.
WE'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED A MONSTER SUCH AS THIS. ITS GUT PRODUCES MASSIVE LEVELS OF BACTERIA AND GAS.
WHICH IS BASICALLY HOW AND WHY IT GOT SO BIG SO FAST.
AGREED, THE OBAN WE BROUGHT ABOARD HAS BEEN RADICALLY ALTERED.
CAPTAIN, I BELIEVE OBAN'S REACTION WAS TRIGGERED BY THE XOXXAN MICROBES RESIDING INSIDE THE WEAVE.
IT WAS LUCK THAT I HAD ORDERED THE WEAVE TAKEN AWAY FOR FURTHER TESTS.
AFFIRMATIVE. THE CREATURE, INITIALLY VULNERABLE, NEEDED TO FIND A SAFE LOCATION IN WHICH TO COMPLETE ITS METAMORPHOSIS--
--BEFORE RETURNING TO DESTROY THE WEAVE AND KILL THE MICROBES--ONLY TO FIND THE WEAVE GONE.
A 'SLEEPER' BIOLOGICAL WEAPON DESIGNED TO DESTROY INDIGENOUS XOXXAN LIFE.
ENMITY BETWEEN THE TWO PLANETS IT WOULD APPEAR IS ALIVE AND WELL.

CAPTAIN.
YES, CHEKOV.
WE HAVE UNEXPECTED VISITORS
THE XANVIAN WARSHIP IS HAILING US. A CAPTAIN MARIN, SIR.
LET'S HEAR WHAT THIS MARIN HAS TO SAY.
CAPTAIN KIRK, I WAS PART OF YOUR GUARD OF HONOR ON XANVIA
MY LATEST PRIVILEGE IS TO INQUIRE AS TO WHY OBAN HAS NOT YET BEEN DELIVERED TO XOXXA?
CAPTAIN MARIN, OUR SCANS SHOW THAT YOUR SHIP'S WEAPONS ARE LOCKED ONTO THE ENTERPRISE. I REMIND YOU THAT THIS IS A MISSION OF PEACE.
AND BE ADVISED THAT I WILL DELIVER OBAN WHEN I AM READY TO DO SO. ENTERPRISE OUT.

SOMEONE SEEMS ANXIOUS TO HAVE OBAN DOWN THERE
CAPTAIN...?
OBAN IS CHANGING AGAIN.
IT HAS EXPANDED LIKE A GIANT EARTH PUFFER FISH.
IF IT CONTINUES ITS CURRENT RATE OF GROWTH, IT WILL NOT ONLY BREAK OUT OF ITS QUARTERS...
...IT WILL ENDANGER THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE ENTERPRISE.
OBAN CANNOT STAY ON BOARD, CAPTAIN.
LOOKS LIKE THE XANVIANS ARE GOING TO HAVE THEIR WISH AFTER ALL.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL. THE OBAN CREATURE'S RAPID EXPANSION POSES TOO GREAT A THREAT TO THE ENTERPRISE.
I'M ORDERING THE TRANSPORT OF OBAN ONTO THE XOXXAN SURFACE.
IT IS MY INTENTION TO HAND OVER AN INCAPACITATED YET MINIMALLY WOUNDED OBAN ONCE THE DECEPTION IS UNCOVERED. IT WILL BE THE ONE SLIM HOPE OF SALVAGING PEACE.
FFZZZZ...

ENERGIZE.
SSS...
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'VE FOLLOWED THE WEAVE HERE. THE WEAVE IS WHAT YOU WANT


SNAP
SNAP

FOOMM!
KRAK

SPOCK, EVEN CONCENTRATED PHASER FIRE HAS NO EFFECT.
AFFIRMATIVE, CAPTAIN.
I DON'T THINK WE CAN TAKE IT...
...ALIVE.

MEANWHILE AN INCREASINGLY IMPATIENT CAPTAIN MARIN HAILS THE ENTERPRISE
WHERE IS CAPTAIN KIRK?
ANSWERED BY CHEKOV CURRENTLY IN OPERATIONAL COMMAND. I HAVE EVERY FAITH IN MY ENSIGN AS FUTURE CAPTAIN MATERIAL
THE CAPTAIN IS, AH...UNWELL HE HAS A BAD COLD
THAT IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH!
WHEN IS THE OBAN HAND-OVER?
OF COURSE, I HEAR YOU, BUT YOU MUST--EH--UNDER-STAND...
...THE ENTERPRISE EASILY OUTRANKS YOUR VESSEL IN FIREPOWER
DISTURB US AGAIN AND I WILL NOT HESITATE TO PUT THIS TO THE TEST. VY MENYA PANIMAYETE?
THE XANVIAN SHIP HAS CUT OFF COMMUNI CATIONS
I SMELL A BIG MUSCOVITE RAT.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL
OBAN HAS DECIMATED THE LANDING PARTY THE CASUALTIES OF THIS ENCOUNTER NOW APPROACHES DOUBLE FIGURES
KREEEEE
IT ENDS NOW.
KRRRR...
HEY!
YOU WANT THE WEAVE--YOU TAKE IT!
WRRR...

KREEEEE!
FOOOMM!
KULP
KRRR...?

T-THUDDD!
GENTLEMEN, YOU LOOK CONCERNED.
JIM, WITH ALL THE GAS GENERATED INSIDE IT--
THE PHASER OVERLOADS AND--

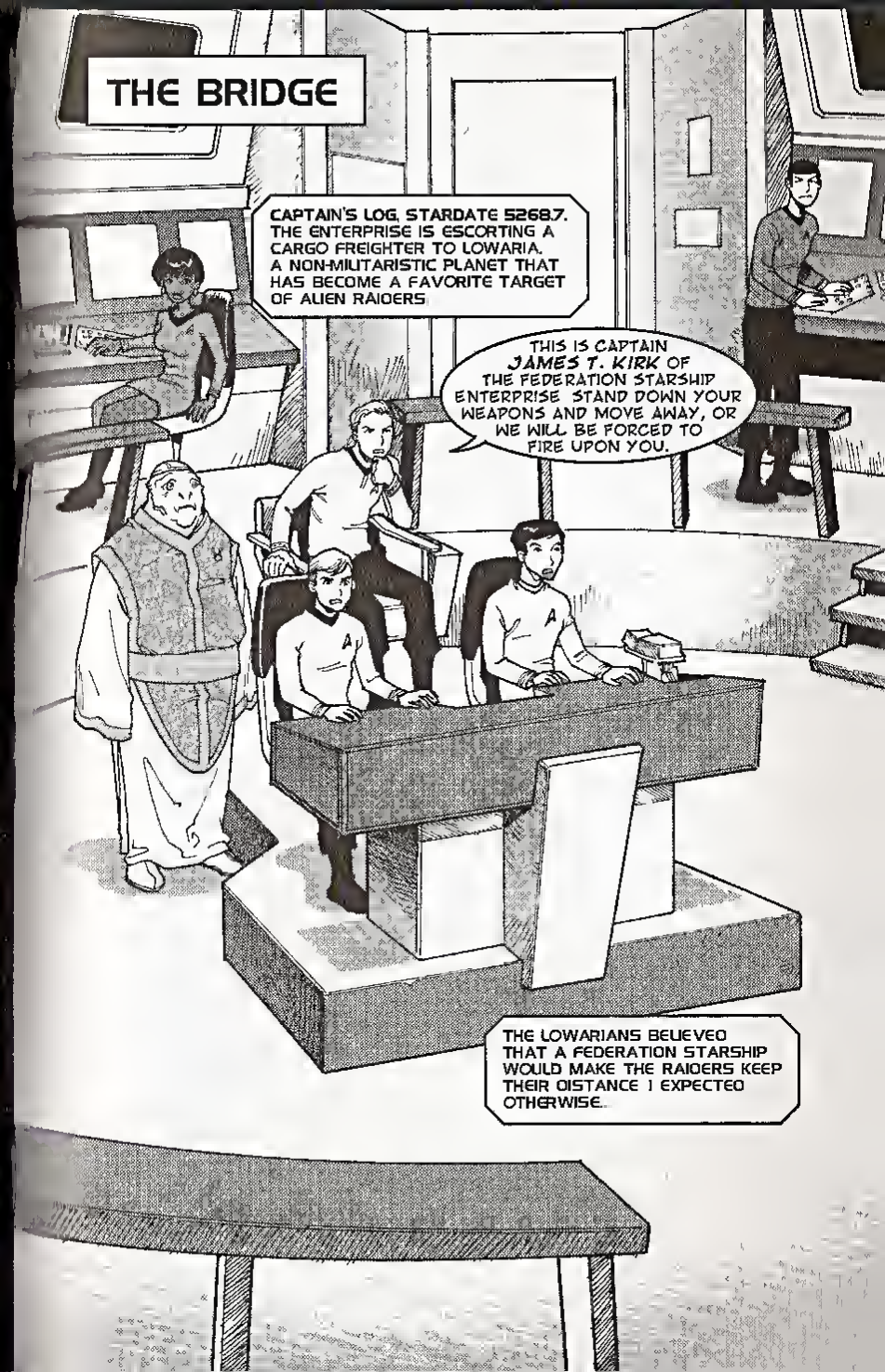
BOOM!

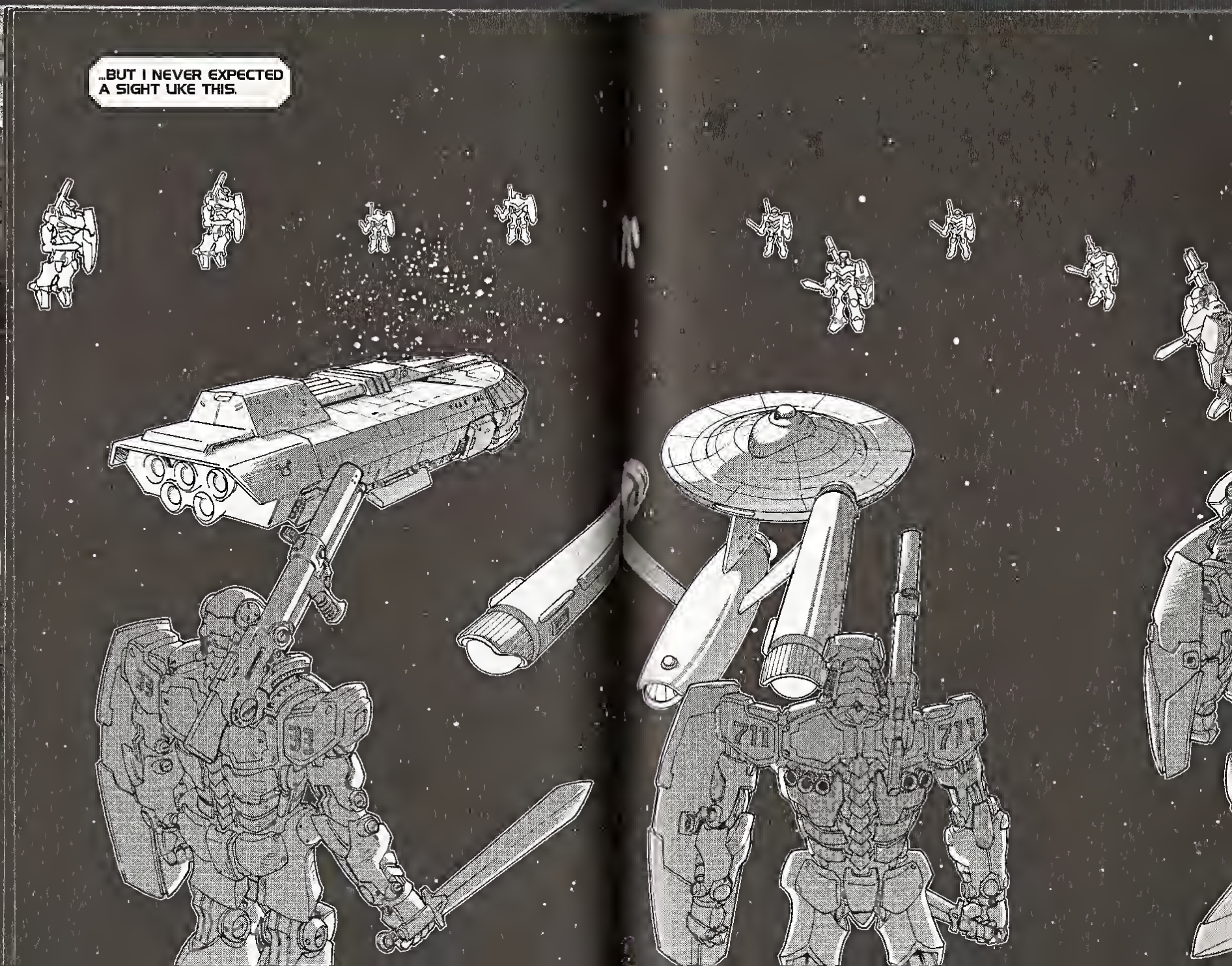
GET ME THE XANVIAN SHIP!
CAPTAIN MARIN, THE CREATURE THE ENTERPRISE BROUGHT ON BOARD WAS DESIGNED TO DESTROY ANY INDIGENOUS LIFEFORM FROM XOXXA.
ONLY A RANDOM ENCOUNTER WITH THE WEAVE ALERTED US TO OBAN'S TRUE PURPOSE.
CAPTAIN, EIGHT OF MY MEN DIED BECAUSE OF YOUR BIOLOGICAL WEAPON.
LOCK ON PHASERS.
THE XAN-VIAN SHIP IS TURNING TO ESCAPE, SIR.

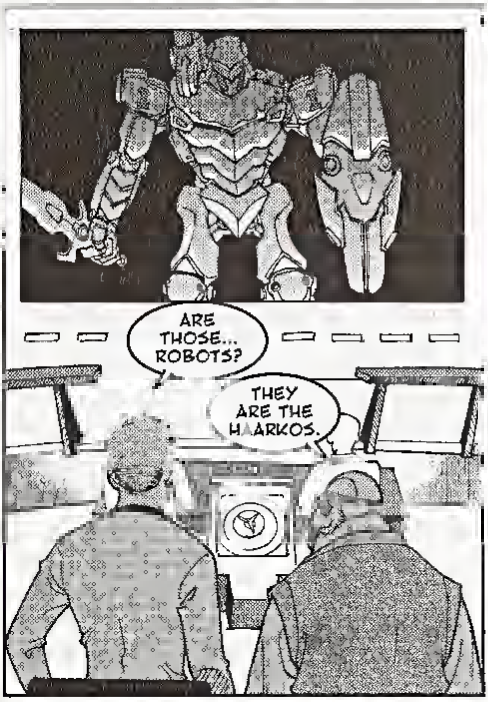
I SHOULD EXPLAIN, MARIN, THAT I WILL NOT FIRE ON YOU, OR GIVE PURSUIT. MY MEN DIED TODAY TO KEEP THE PEACE THAT YOU HAVE THREAT-ENED.
OBAN IS DESTROYED. LET THE WAR FINALLY BE OVER. KIRK OUT.
CAPTAIN. I HAVE AN INCOMING TRANSMISSION. PRESIDENT BALLAL OF XOXXA WISHES TO SPEAK TO YOU REGARDING AN INCIDENT.
A LONG DAY IS ABOUT TO GET LONGER. WHICH REMINDS ME, IF I EVER NEEDED REMINDING...
...WHY I DON'T ALLOW PETS ON BOARD MY SHIP!
USS ENTERPRISE
NCC-1701

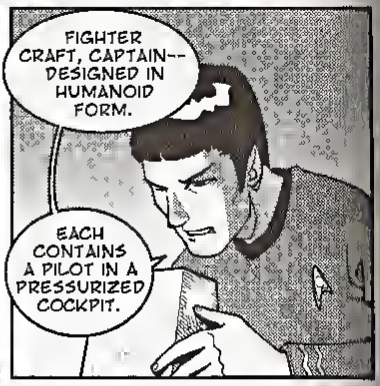
ORPHANS

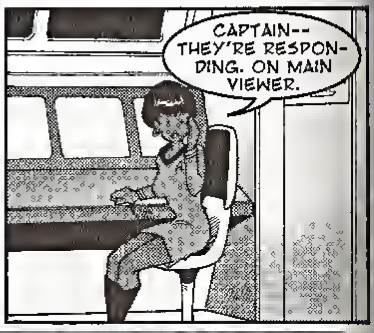
STORY BY ROB TOKAR
ART BY EJ SU

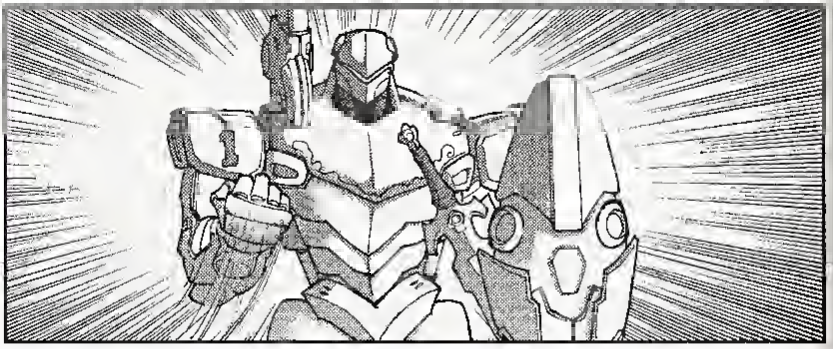

THE BRIDGE
CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 5268.7. THE ENTERPRISE IS ESCORTING A CARGO FREIGHTER TO LOWARIA, A NON-MILITARISTIC PLANET THAT HAS BECOME A FAVORITE TARGET OF ALIEN RAIDERS.
THIS IS CAPTAIN JAMES T. KIRK OF THE FEDERATION STARSHIP ENTERPRISE. STAND DOWN YOUR WEAPONS AND MOVE AWAY, OR WE WILL BE FORCED TO FIRE UPON YOU.
THE LOWARIANS BELIEVED THAT A FEDERATION STARSHIP WOULD MAKE THE RAIDERS KEEP THEIR DISTANCE. I EXPECTED OTHERWISE.

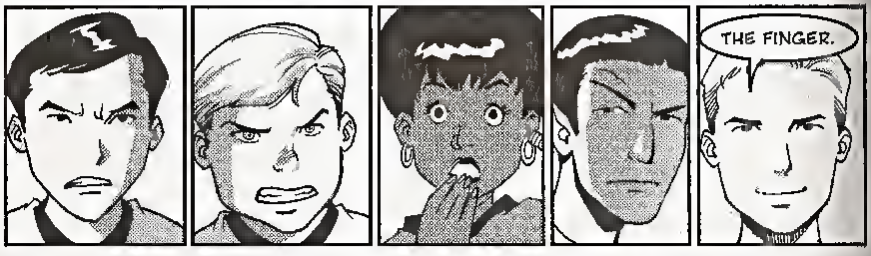

...BUT I NEVER EXPECTED A SIGHT LIKE THIS.


ARE THOSE... ROBOTS?
THEY ARE THE HARKOS.

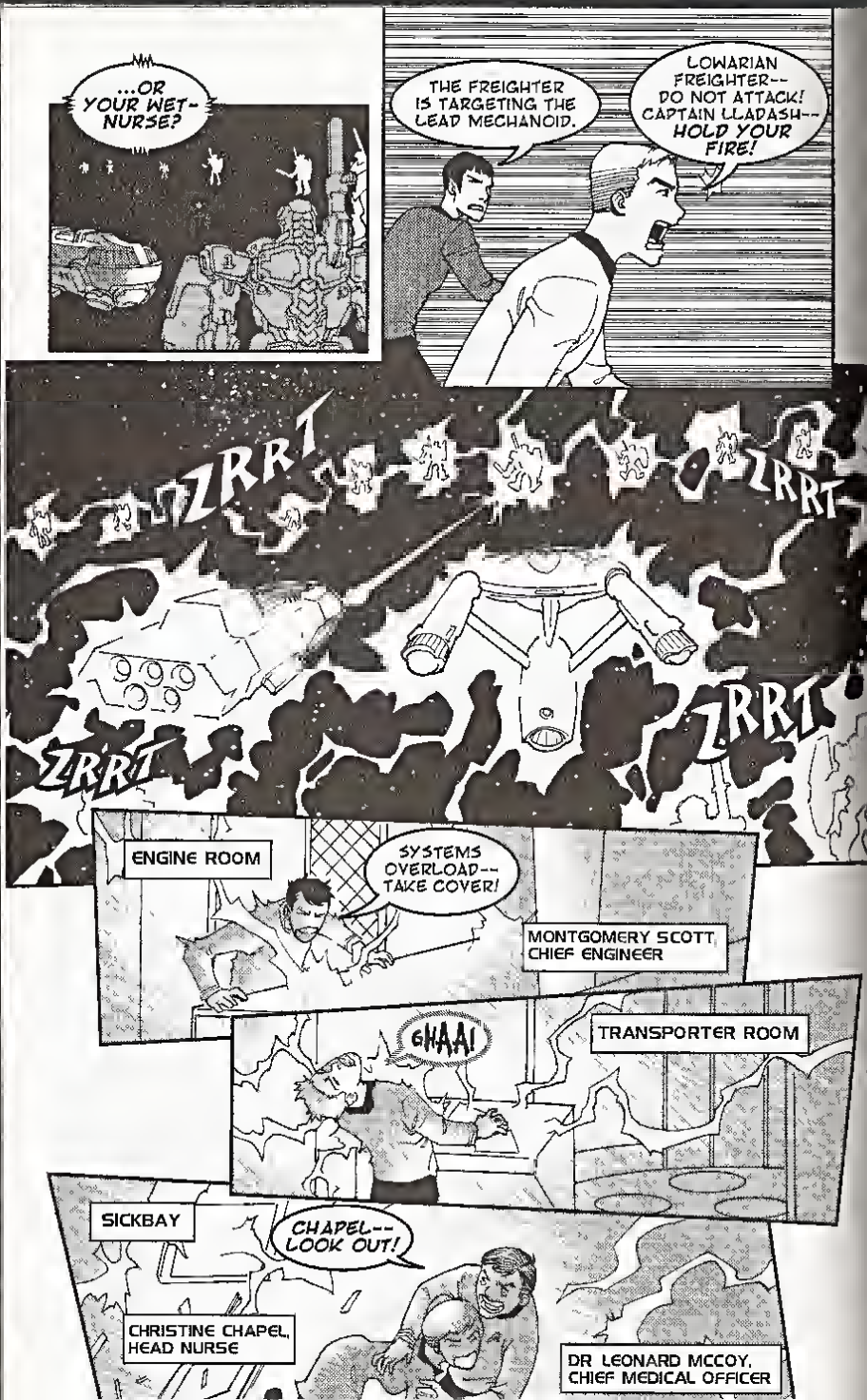

FIGHTER CRAFT, CAPTAIN-- DESIGNED IN HUMANOID FORM.
EACH CONTAINS A PILOT IN A PRESSURIZED COCKPIT.


CAPTAIN-- THEY'RE RESPONDING. ON MAIN VIEWER.




THE FINGER.

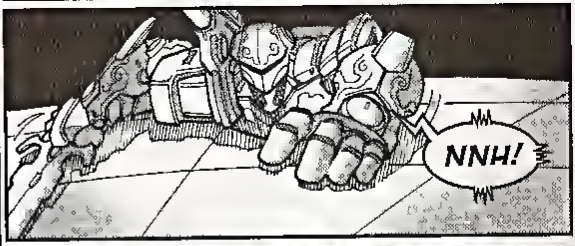
ONE? ONE WHAT? WHAT IS IT TRYING TO SAY?
IT'S A VERY OLD EARTH GESTURE, MR. MELKOR..AND IT TELLS ME A LOT ABOUT WHO WE'RE DEALING WITH.
READY TO LOCK PHASERS, CAPTAIN.
STAND DOWN, MR. SULU.
BECAUSE THEY WANT THAT. ASK YOURSELF, MR. MELKOR--WHY SHOULD I SHOOT WHEN MY ENEMY TELLS ME TO?
CAPTAIN, THE MECHANOIDS' SHIELDS ARE LINKED BY A LOW-LEVEL CARRIER WAVE. IT IS NEARLY UNDETECT-ABLE--
PUT TACTICAL DISPLAY ON MAIN VIEWER MR. SPOCK, FULL SCANS ON THE LEAD MECHANOID
WHAT?! CAPTAIN KIRK, THESE ARE MARAUDERS WHO INTEND TO ATTACK--WHY NOT FIRE ON THEM?
THE LEAD HAARKOS IS HAILING THE LOWARIAN VESSEL
ON SPEAKERS
LOWARIAN COWARDS--ARE YOU TOO FEARFUL TO TRAVEL THE STARS ALONE? IS THE FEDERATION YOUR PROTECTOR...

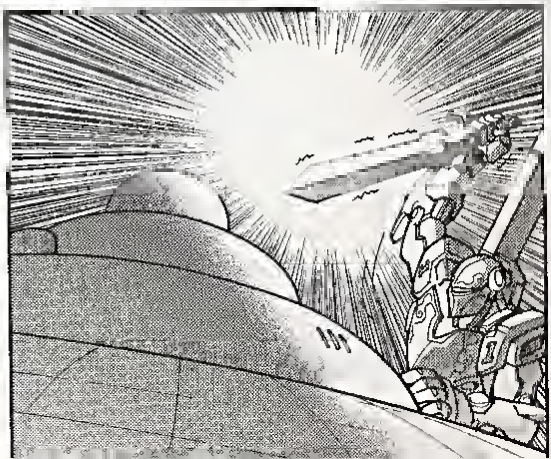

...OR YOUR WET-NURSE?
THE FREIGHTER IS TARGETING THE LEAD MECHANOID.
LOWARIAN FREIGHTER-- DO NOT ATTACK! CAPTAIN LLADASH-- HOLD YOUR FIRE!
ZRRT
ZRRT
ZRRT
ZRRT
ENGINE ROOM
SYSTEMS OVERLOAD-- TAKE COVER!
MONTGOMERY SCOTT, CHIEF ENGINEER
GHAA!
TRANSPORTER ROOM
SICKBAY
CHAPEL-- LOOK OUT!
CHRISTINE CHAPEL, HEAD NURSE
DR LEONARD MCCOY, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

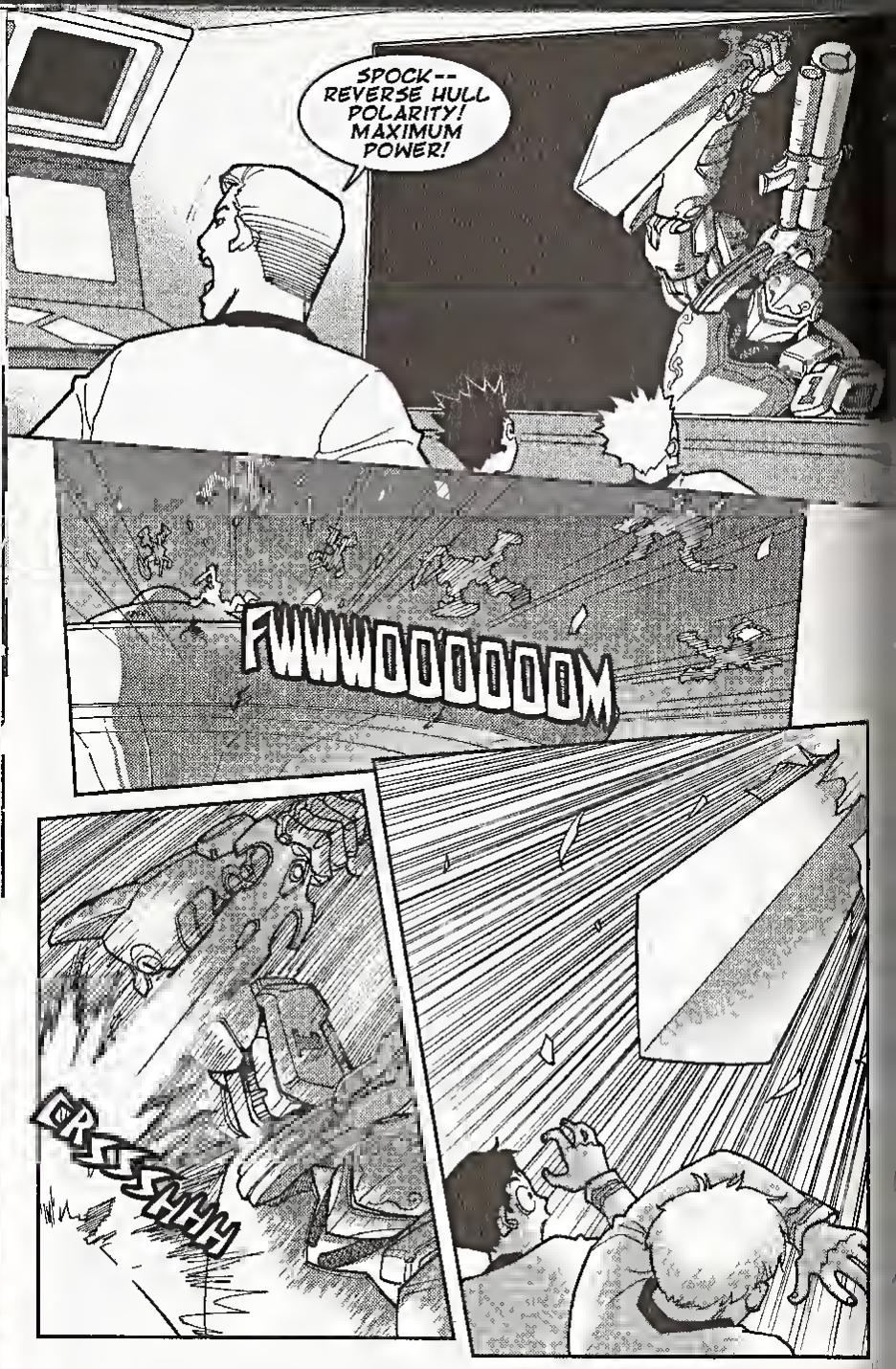
AIIEEE!!
DAMAGE REPORT!
WE'VE GOT MULTIPLE OVERLOADS IN OUR POWER DISTRIBUTION NETWORK--IT'S AFFECTING SYSTEMS ALL OVER THE SHIP!
WE'RE TRYIN' T'RE-ROUTE POWER NOW!
SHIELDS, TRANSPORTERS AND TRACTOR BEAMS ARE DISABLED.
ALL SYSTEMS ABOARD THE LOWARIAN VESSEL ARE DOWN, INCLUDING LIFE-SUPPORT
THE HAARKOS HAVE BROKEN FORMATION--THEIR ENERGY WEB IS GONE
SULU--LOCK PHASERS ON THE NEAREST MECHANOID AND FIRE!
SIR--

--THEY'RE ALREADY TOO CLOSE!
SULU, MOVE US AWAY FROM THE FREIGHTER!
AWAY, SIR?
WHAT?!
SULU--WHEN WE GET ENOUGH DISTANCE, TARGET THE MECHS ATTACKING THE FREIGHTER AND FIRE AT WILL.
NOW!
HOW CAN YOU ABANDON --?!

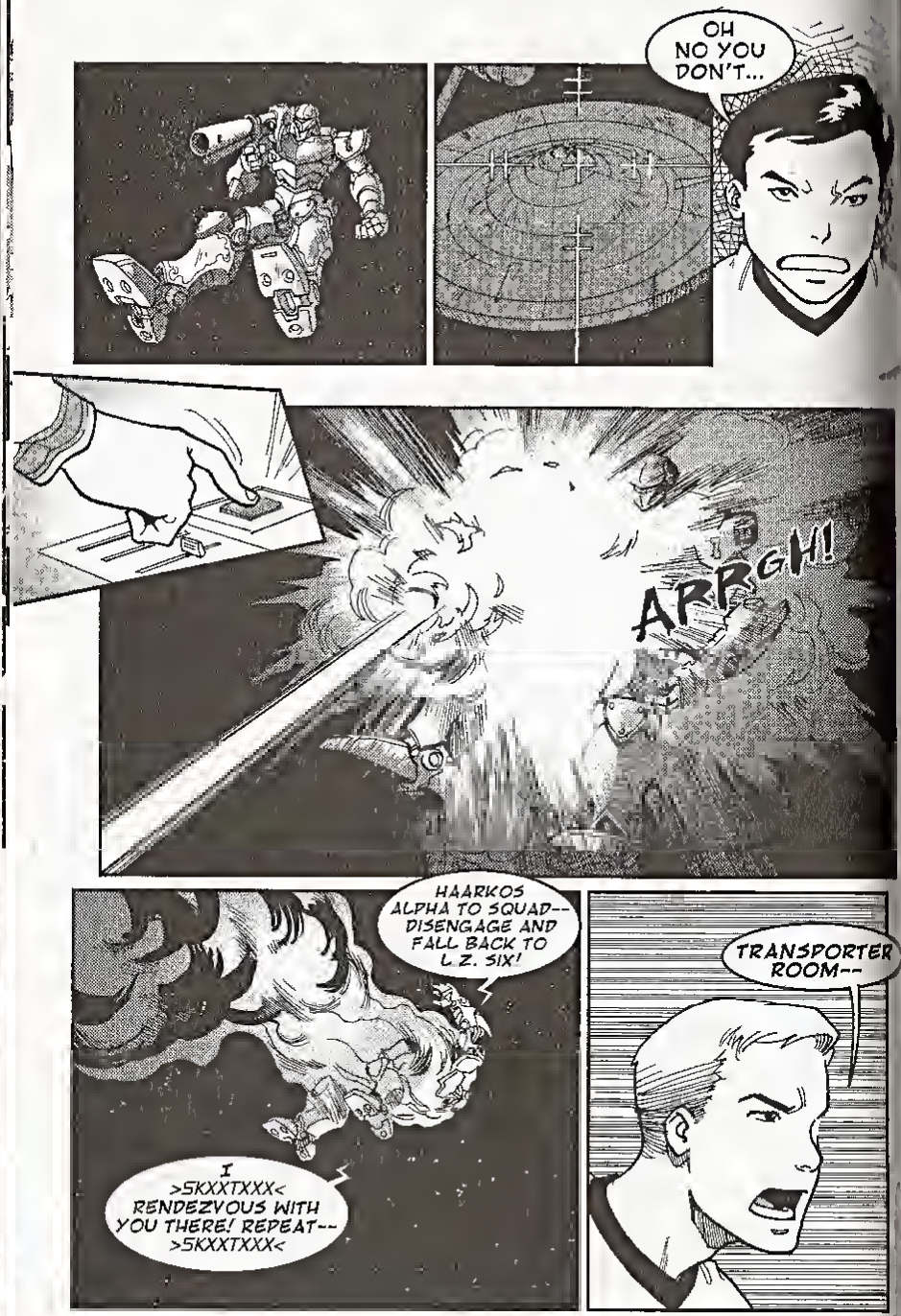
SPOCK, REROUTE AUXILIARY POWER TO MAGNETIZE OUR HULL--MAXIMUM OUTPUT!


NNH!



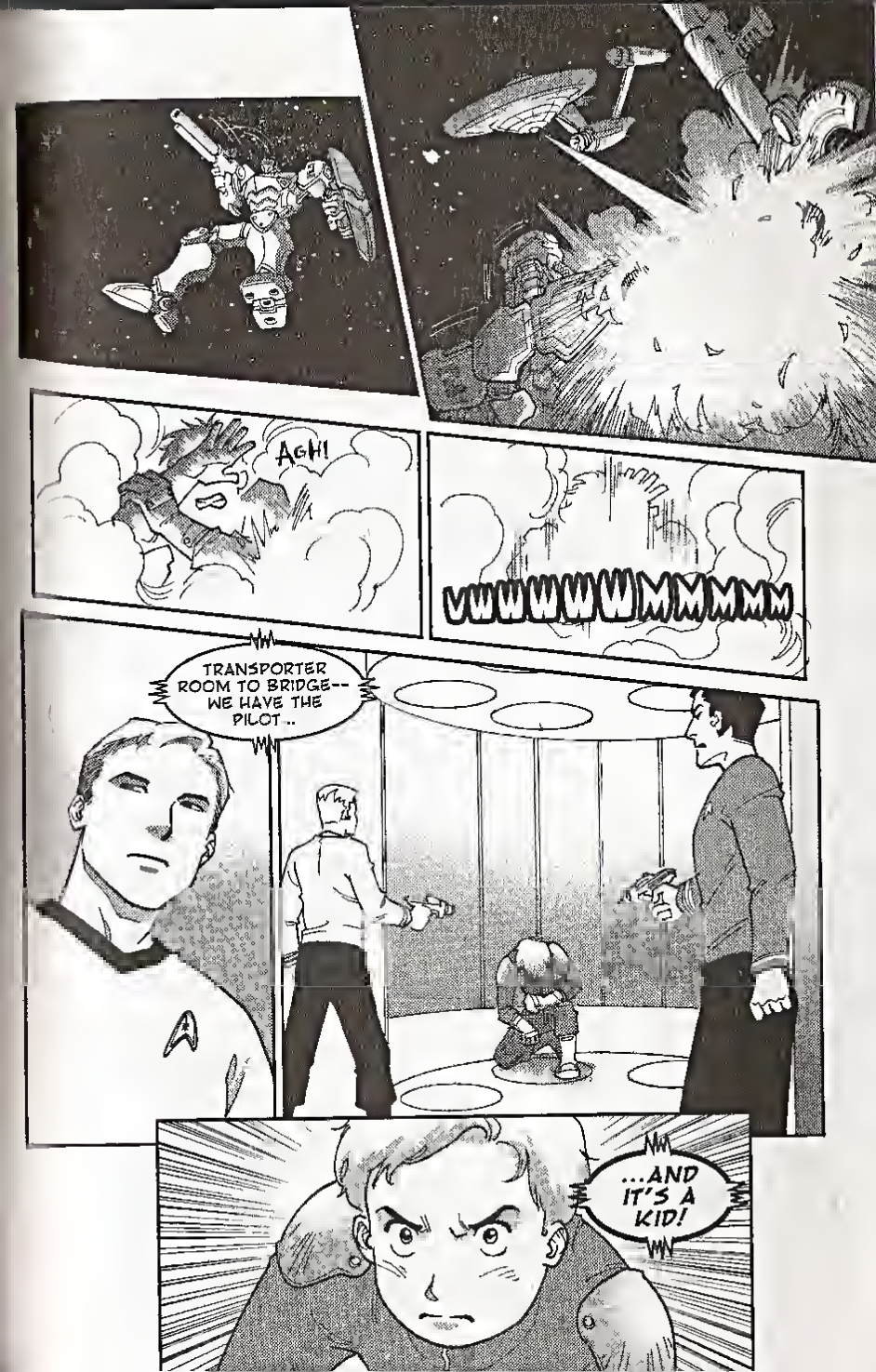

SPOCK-- REVERSE HULL POLARITY! MAXIMUM POWER!
FWWWOOOOOOM
ERSSHHH

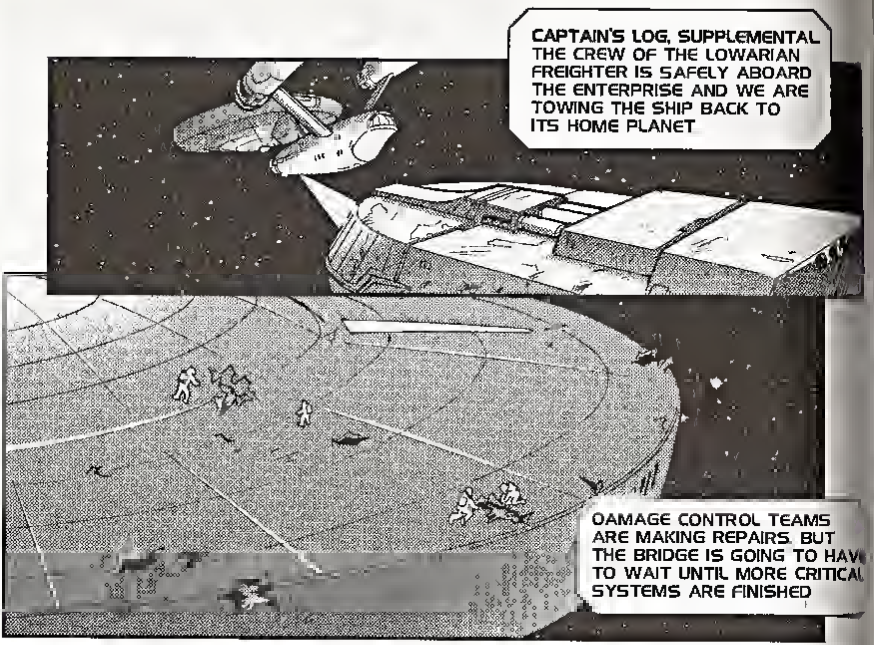
Eep!
?!
!!
FWWUUM
HULL BREACH. EMERGENCY FORCE-FIELDS ARE HOLDING.
MAINTAIN DUTY STATIONS. SWITCH TO AUXILIARY VIEWSCREENS.

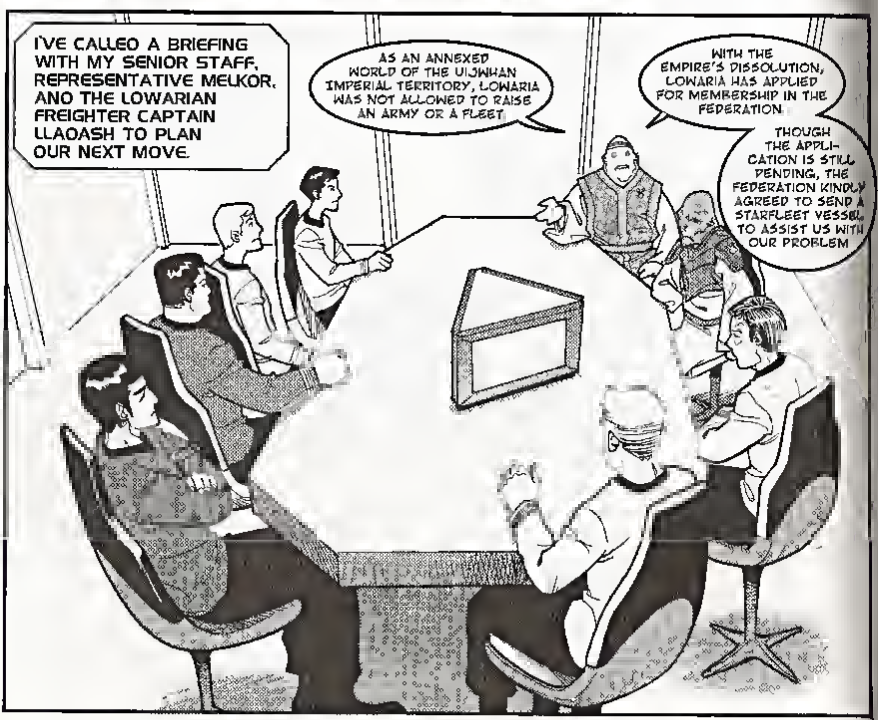

OH NO YOU DON'T...
ARRGH!
HAARKOS ALPHA TO SQUAD-- DISENGAGE AND FALL BACK TO L.Z. SIX!
I >5KXXTXXX< RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU THERE! REPEAT-- >5KXXTXXX<
TRANSPORTER ROOM--

--LOCK ONTO THE PILOT OF THAT DAMAGED CRAFT AND ENERGIZE!
CAPTAIN-- I'M ALMOST FINISHED BY-PASSING THE FUSED SYSTEMS NOW! ANOTHER MINUTE AT MOST!
THE HAARKOS ARE RETREATING, CAPTAIN. BUT OUR STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY IS DANGEROUSLY LOW TO RISK PURSUIT.
AND WE CAN'T ABANDON THE LOWARIANS ON A DEAD SHIP.
TRACTOR BEAM STATUS?
STILL INOPERATIVE.
MR. SULU, READY A PHOTON TORPEDO.

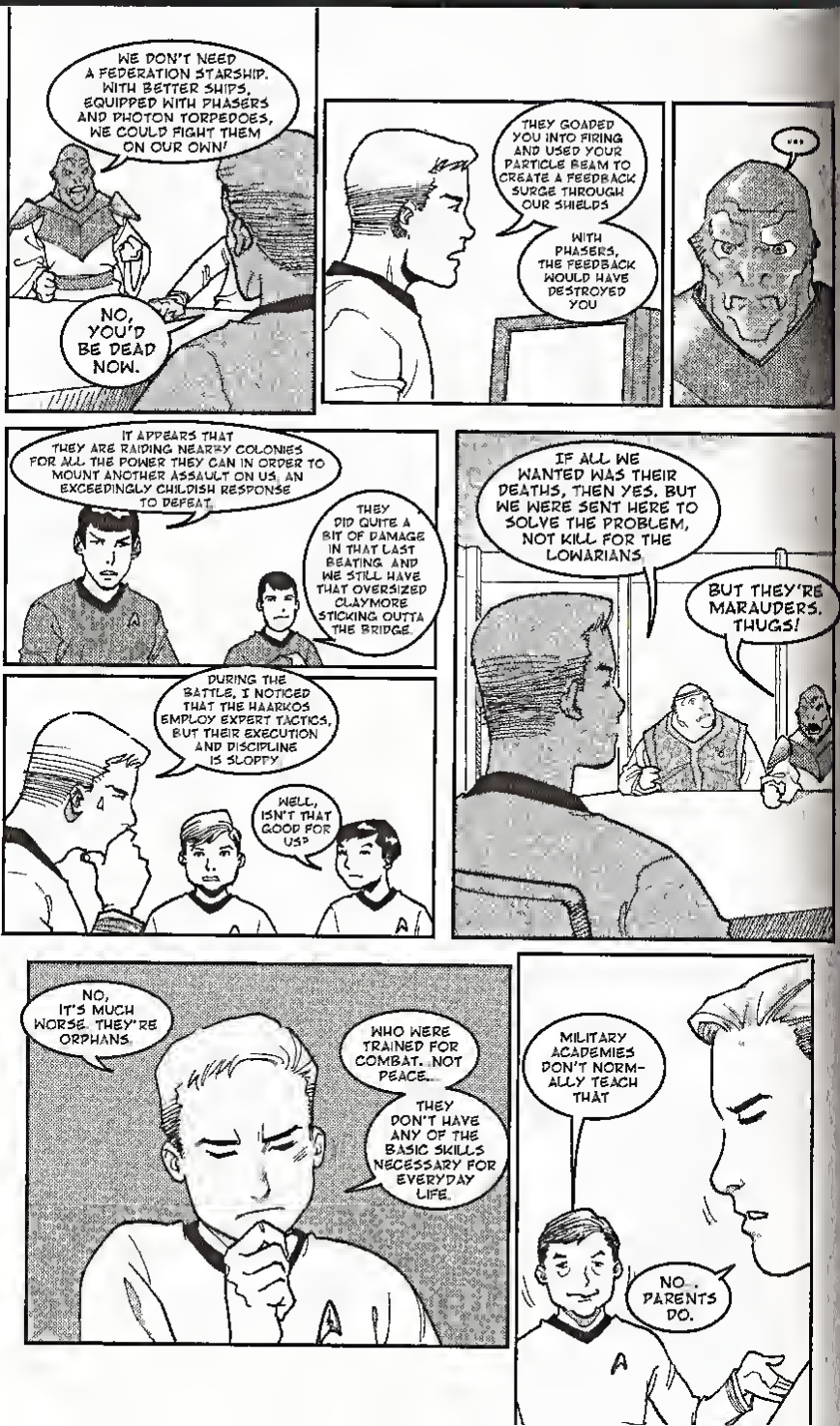
THE RETREATING HAARKOS HAVE SCATTERED. ONE HAS BEEN LEFT BEHIND, HEAVILY DAMAGED BUT STILL ARMED.
MR. SULU-- DISARM THE REMAINING MECHANOID.
AYE, SIR.


AGH!
VWWWWWMMMMM
TRANSPORTER ROOM TO BRIDGE-- WE HAVE THE PILOT ..
...AND IT'S A KID!


CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL. THE CREW OF THE LOWARIAN FREIGHTER IS SAFELY ABOARD THE ENTERPRISE AND WE ARE TOWING THE SHIP BACK TO ITS HOME PLANET.
DAMAGE CONTROL TEAMS ARE MAKING REPAIRS. BUT THE BRIDGE IS GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL MORE CRITICAL SYSTEMS ARE FINISHED.


I'VE CALLED A BRIEFING WITH MY SENIOR STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE MELKOR, AND THE LOWARIAN FREIGHTER CAPTAIN LLAOASH TO PLAN OUR NEXT MOVE.
AS AN ANNEXED WORLD OF THE UIJWHAN IMPERIAL TERRITORY, LOWARIA WAS NOT ALLOWED TO RAISE AN ARMY OR A FLEET.
WITH THE EMPIRE'S DISSOLUTION, LOWARIA HAS APPLIED FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE FEDERATION.
THOUGH THE APPLICATION IS STILL PENDING, THE FEDERATION KINDLY AGREED TO SEND A STARFLEET VESSEL TO ASSIST US WITH OUR PROBLEM.

THE MECH PILOTS--KNOWN AS THE HAARKOS--WERE STUDENTS AT AN ELITE TRAINING FACILITY CHARGED WITH PREPARING THEM TO BE THE NEW MILITARY FORCE FOR THE EMPIRE
QUALIFIED STUDENTS WERE INDUCTED AT AN EARLY AGE AND ALL TRACES OF THEIR ORIGINS WERE ERASED. EVEN THEIR DNA WAS ALTERED TO MAKE THEM MORE FORMIDABLE WARRIORS AND TO REMOVE ANY TIES BUT THOSE TO THE EMPIRE
AS A RESULT, THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW WHERE THEY CAME FROM
WITH THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE, THE HAARKOS WERE TO BE DISBANDED. BEFORE THAT COULD HAPPEN, MOST OF THE STUDENTS STOLE THEIR ROBOTS AND STRUCK OUT ON THEIR OWN RATHER THAN FACE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE ON WHATEVER WORLDS MIGHT HAVE THEM.
HOWEVER, THE HAARKOS HAD NO DESIGNED COURSE OF ACTION, AND THEREFORE STARTED MARAUDING TO EXTORT THEIR BASIC NECESSITIES. BEING WITHOUT A MILITARY, LOWARIA BECAME THEIR FAVORITE TARGET


WE DON'T NEED A FEDERATION STARSHIP. WITH BETTER SHIPS, EQUIPPED WITH PHASERS AND PHOTON TORPEDOES, WE COULD FIGHT THEM ON OUR OWN!
NO, YOU'D BE DEAD NOW.
THEY GOADED YOU INTO FIRING AND USED YOUR PARTICLE BEAM TO CREATE A FEEDBACK SURGE THROUGH OUR SHIELDS
WITH PHASERS, THE FEEDBACK WOULD HAVE DESTROYED YOU
...
IT APPEARS THAT THEY ARE RAIDING NEARBY COLONIES FOR ALL THE POWER THEY CAN IN ORDER TO MOUNT ANOTHER ASSAULT ON US. AN EXCEEDINGLY CHILDISH RESPONSE TO DEFEAT.
THEY DID QUITE A BIT OF DAMAGE IN THAT LAST BEATING AND WE STILL HAVE THAT OVERSIZED CLAYMORE STICKING OUTTA THE BRIDGE.
IF ALL WE WANTED WAS THEIR DEATHS, THEN YES. BUT WE WERE SENT HERE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, NOT KILL FOR THE LOWARIANS
BUT THEY'RE MARAUDERS. THUGS!
DURING THE BATTLE, I NOTICED THAT THE HAARKOS EMPLOY EXPERT TACTICS, BUT THEIR EXECUTION AND DISCIPLINE IS SLOPPY
WELL, ISN'T THAT GOOD FOR US?
NO, IT'S MUCH WORSE. THEY'RE ORPHANS.
WHO WERE TRAINED FOR COMBAT. NOT PEACE...
THEY DON'T HAVE ANY OF THE BASIC SKILLS NECESSARY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE.
MILITARY ACADEMIES DON'T NORMALLY TEACH THAT
NO. PARENTS DO.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL. SCOTTY AND SPOCK ARE STUDYING THE HAARKOS' MECH. DOCTOR MCCOY IS ANALYZING THE PILOT'S INTERFACE UNIT. SULU AND CHEKOV ARE REVIEWING THE HAARKOS' FIGHTING STYLE AND UHURA IS EXAMINING THE HAARKOS' COMMUNICATIONS. I...WANT TO SEE WHAT MAKES THE HAARKOS TICK.
I'M JAMES KIRK, CAPTAIN OF THIS SHIP. ACCORDING TO YOUR VESSEL'S RECORDS, YOU ARE XILL HOFFA, HAARKOS BETA. SECOND-IN-COMMAND. YOU'RE BEING HELD ON CHARGES OF PIRACY. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
I HAVE ORDERS TO STOP THE HAARKOS RAIDS, USING WHATEVER FORCE I DEEM NECESSARY. IF YOU COOPERATE, I MAY BE ABLE TO OFFER YOU LENIENCY.
IF NOT, YOU WILL BE REMANDED TO THE LOWARIAN AUTHORITIES AND TRIED ACCORDING TO THEIR LAWS.
Y'KNOW--IF YOU COULD FLY AS WELL AS YOU SULK, YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE NOW. I TOLD MY CHIEF ENGINEER TO CHECK YOUR SPACESUIT'S LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM.
ANYONE WHO THINKS A BUNCH OF OVERSIZED TIN SOLDIERS COULD MATCH MY SHIP IS PROBABLY NOT GETTING ENOUGH OXYGEN TO HIS BRAIN.
SPEAKING OF THAT JUNKPILE YOU WERE FLYING, WE'VE TAKEN IT INTO CUSTODY--
I'M THINKING OF GIVING IT TO THE FARMERS ON LOWARIA. I'M SURE THEY COULD USE SOMETHING TO SCARE THE BIRDS AWAY FROM THEIR CROPS.

THOSE SPINELESS LOWARIANS WOULDN'T DARE--!
SO YOU CAN HEAR ME. GOOD IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE TO SETTLE THIS WITHOUT KILLING YOUR COMRADES, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO COMMUNICATE
COME ON-- LET'S TAKE A WALK.
WHY?
I WANT YOU TO SEE WHAT WE'RE CAPABLE OF. THE ENTERPRISE IS--
--A HEAVILY ARMED CONSTITUTION-CLASS FEDERATION STARSHIP BLAH BLAH BLAH. I KNOW WHAT YOUR SHIP CAN DO.
YOU KNOW ITS ARMOR AND ITS WEAPON CAPACITY. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS SHIP ALLOWS US TO DO. HOW IT ALLOWS US TO EXPLORE
AND YOU'RE BORING ME WITH THIS BECAUSE...?
BECAUSE HAVING A CLEAR MISSION GIVES US FOCUS. IT SERVES AS A POINT OF REFERENCE FOR HOW CLOSE OR HOW FAR WE ARE FROM OUR GOAL.
YOUR MISSION HAS LANDED YOU IN MY BRIG. HOW FAR DOES THAT TAKE YOU FROM YOUR GOAL?
FINE.

WHEN I WAS AROUND YOUR AGE, I ATTENDED STARFLEET ACADEMY. LIKE YOU, I WAS CLEVER, RESOURCEFUL, QUICK AND FEARLESS. WHICH MADE MY FAILURES THAT MUCH HARDER ON ME. I HAD FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES, A FEW COMPETITORS. AND THEN, THERE WAS CAROL.
I WAS ON THE FAST TRACK FOR COMMAND... BUT THE WAY I FELT ABOUT HER...I WAS READY TO GIVE IT ALL UP...ALMOST.
SO WHY ARE YOU HERE? WHERE IS SHE?
THAT'S A COMPLICATED STORY. BUT THE MEMORY OF HER DRIVES ME TO TRY HARDER WITH THE NEW FEMALE IN MY LIFE.
...THE ENTERPRISE.
YOUR SHIP IS YOUR GIRLFRIEND? CREEPY
IS..IS THAT--?
YES. YOUR LEADER'S SWORD IS PROVING VERY DIFFICULT TO REMOVE.
ONLY THE HAARKOS ALPHA COULD REMOVE IT WITHOUT TEARING YOUR BULK-HEADS APART
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU FOUGHT US OFF WITH THE--
FIGHTING YOU WAS NEVER OUR FIRST CHOICE.

I HAVE A LIST OF THE ITEMS THE HAARKOS HAVE STOLEN FROM LOWARIA: FOOD, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, TOOLS, REPLACEMENT PARTS
THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO SURVIVE. IF YOU CAN GET YOUR FORCES TO SURRENDER PEACEFULLY, THEN WE CAN HELP YOU FIND THOSE WAYS
WHEN THE EMPIRE PULLED US FROM OUR FAMILIES AND THREW US INTO THE ARMY, WHERE WERE YOU? WHERE WERE YOUR "BETTER WAYS" THEN?
NO, YOU ONLY COME AROUND WHEN THE HAARKOS
IF YOU KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT US, YOU'D KNOW THAT STARFLEET GENERAL ORDER ONE--OUR PRIME DIRECTIVE--FORBIDS US FROM GETTING INVOLVED IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER CULTURES. HISTORY HAS SHOWN US THAT EVEN THE MOST WELL-INTENTIONED INTERFERENCE OFTEN LEADS TO DISASTER.
ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE HAARKOS HAD SIMPLY COME TO THE FEDERATION AND ASKED FOR AID, THE FEDERATION COUNCIL WOULD HAVE BEEN DUTY-BOUND TO GIVE THAT REQUEST EVERY CONSIDERATION.
THIS SHIP ISN'T DESIGNED TO FIGHT A SQUADRON OF SMALL, MANEUVERABLE CRAFT... WE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE
NOT ANYMORE.

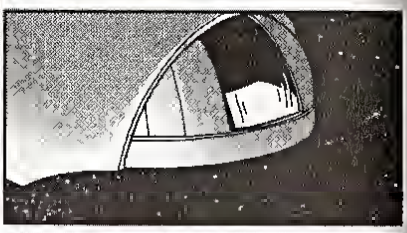
?!
WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY MECH?!
I TOLD YOU-- WE ARE EXPLORERS. OUR ENGINEERS AND SCIENTISTS ARE LEARNING ALL ABOUT YOUR CRAFT FOR OUR NEXT ENCOUNTER.
WAIT! THIS-- THIS ISN'T FROM MINE. IT'S...
...HAARKOS ALPHA!
WHERE IS THE PILOT? I DEMAND YOU TAKE ME TO HER CELL IMMEDIATELY!
SHE'S NOT IN A CELL.
THEN WHERE IS SHE?!

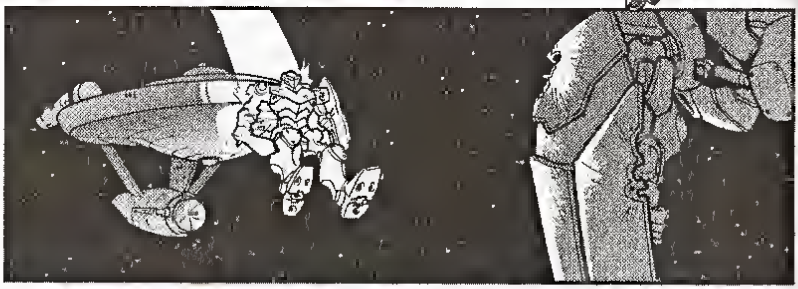
I'M SORRY.
YOU KILLED HER!
SHRAPNEL FROM THE EXPLOSION TORE OPEN HER HULL AND PUNCTURED HER SPACE-SUIT. SHE DIED OF ASPHYXIATION AND EXPOSURE.
WE TRIED TO BEAM HER OUT-- JUST LIKE WE DID YOU-- BUT YOUR ATTACK PREVENTED THAT.
WHY DIDN'T YOU HELP HER INSTEAD OF COMING AFTER US?
I WAS HELPING THE OTHERS! I HAD TO LEAD THEM AWAY! I DIDN'T KNOW--! IF I HAD KNOWN--!
HER SPACE-SUIT WOULD STILL HAVE BEEN TORN OPEN...AND SHE STILL WOULD HAVE DIED.
BUT THERE WAS A WAY YOU COULD HAVE SAVED HER.
WHAT? HOW?
YOU KNEW IT WAS A BAD IDEA TO GO UP AGAINST US.
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?
IF I'D QUESTIONED HER PLAN, THEN...

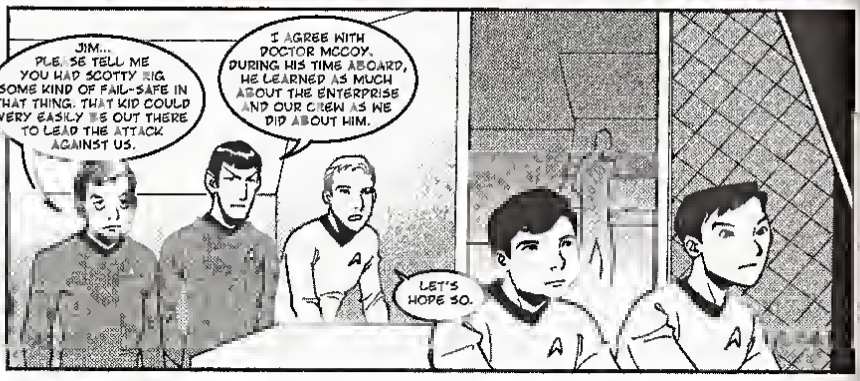
THEN WHAT?
WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED?
I... SHE...
SHE WOULD HAVE LOOKED WEAK IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS
SHE SOUNDED THE RETREAT. WHY DIDN'T SHE ASK FOR AN EVAC?
PROBABLY FOR THE SAME REASON SHE SOUNDED THE RETREAT. SHE MUST HAVE CARED ABOUT YOU.
SHE HAD THE MOST POWERFUL MACHINE AND THE MOST EXPERIENCE, SO IF SHE WAS OUTMATCHED, THE REST OF YOU WERE IN GRAVE DANGER
SHE TOOK CARE OF US, TOOK CONTROL WHEN EVERYTHING FELL APART. SHE KEPT US ALL TOGETHER, KEPT US SAFE.
AND NOW THAT'S YOUR JOB.
WE'VE BEEN GETTING DISTRESS CALLS FROM LOWARIA. THE HAARKOS ARE CURRENTLY LEADERLESS, DAMAGED AND OUT OF CONTROL.
THEY'RE ATTACKING ALMOST AT RANDOM. ABSORBING AS MUCH POWER AS THEIR BATTERIES CAN HOLD. WE BELIEVE THEY'RE PREPARING FOR ONE LAST BATTLE.
THEY NEED YOU TO SAVE THEM FROM THEMSELVES.
I... I CAN'T.
YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST. BUT YOU CAN AFFECT THE FUTURE. MAKE UP FOR PAST REGRETS.

HAARKON PROTOS...
IT'S A REAL BEAUTY. IT MUST BE A POWERFUL FEELING OF FREEDOM; LIKE YOU'RE FLYING THROUGH SPACE YOURSELF.
IT'S A TOTAL RUSH, UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE...
AND IT'S NOT WORTH WHAT'S HAPPENED.
THEN DON'T LET THIS BEHAVIOR PERSIST. HELP YOUR FELLOW HAARKOS. HELP... YOUR FRIENDS.
YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO GET ME TO DO WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO.
I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO BE TOLD WHAT TO DO. I THINK YOU NEED TO LEARN TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES.
GOOD TO WHOM? YOU? STARFLEET? YOUR FEDERATION?
TO YOU. YOUR CHOICES DEFINE WHO YOU ARE.
BULL. WHAT DID YOUR CHOICES EVER MAKE YOU?

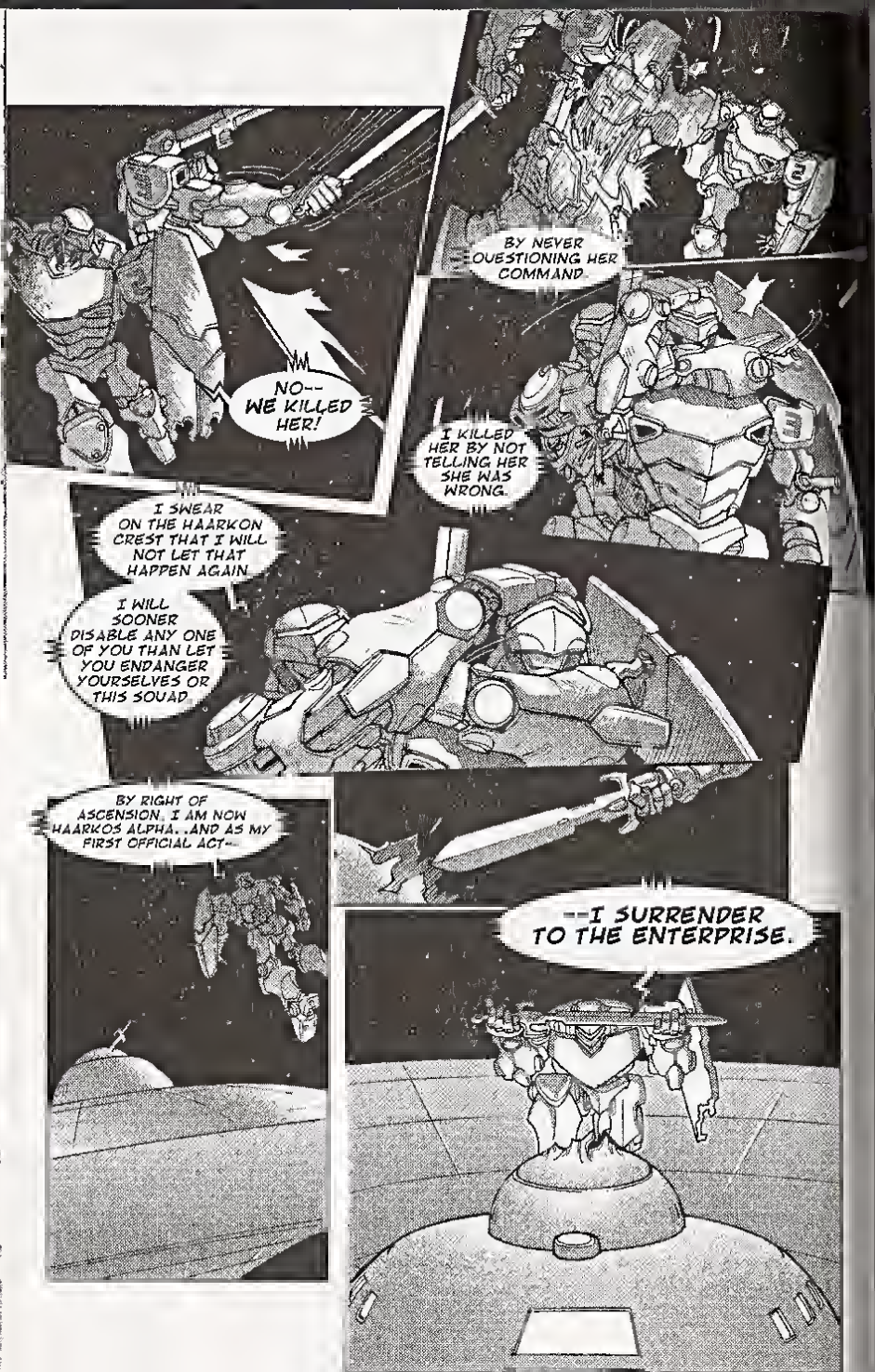
CAPTAIN...
. . OF A REALLY BIG SHIP.
RED ALERT. ALL HANDS TO BATTLE-STATIONS. CAPTAIN TO THE BRIDGE.
XILL, LISTEN TO ME. YOU ARE NOW HAARKOS ALPHA. IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET THE HAARKOS TO STAND DOWN BEFORE THEY DESTROY THE ENTERPRISE OR ARE DESTROYED BY IT. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
.....
I GOTTA GO OUT THERE.
SURELY HE'S NOT SUGGESTING WE LET HIM HOP BACK IN THAT THING AND FLY OUT OF HERE...
I'M NOT SUGGESTING. I'M TELLING YOU THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GOTTA BE.
THE KID'S MAD.
CAPTAIN, THAT IS INADVISABLE.



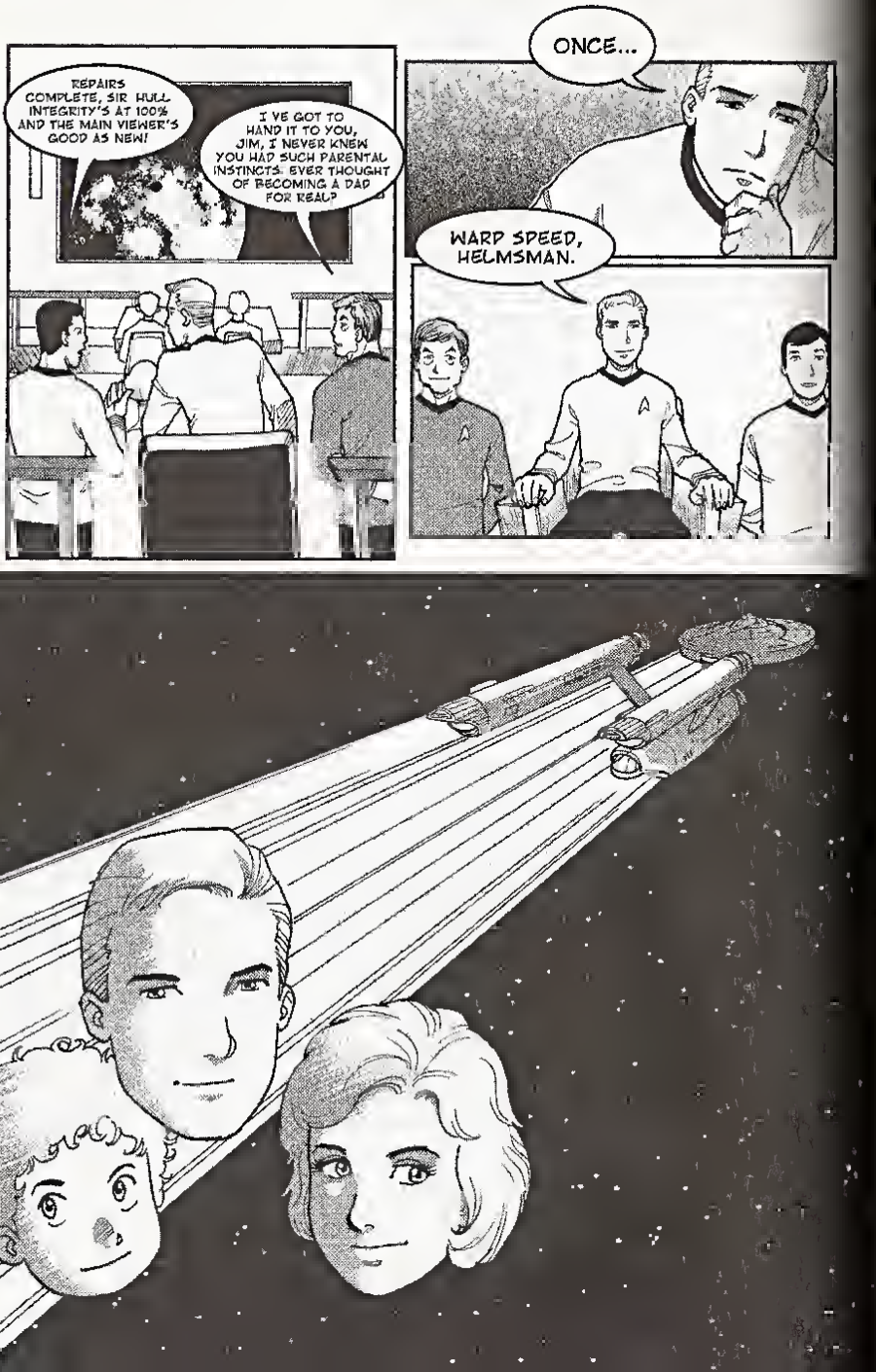



JIM... PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAD SCOTTY RIG SOME KIND OF FAIL-SAFE IN THAT THING. THAT KID COULD VERY EASILY BE OUT THERE TO LEAD THE ATTACK AGAINST US.
I AGREE WITH DOCTOR MCCOY. DURING HIS TIME ABOARD, HE LEARNED AS MUCH ABOUT THE ENTERPRISE AND OUR CREW AS WE DID ABOUT HIM.
LET'S HOPE SO.

WHERE'S HAARKOS ALPHA?
SHE'S.. DEAD.
THEY KILLED HER?!
ASSUME STANDBY FORMATION AND AWAIT MY ORDERS.
STANDBY? WHAT'S UP WITH THAT? THEY GOT TO YOU, DIDN'T THEY, XILL?
L-LISTEN--
TO SOMEONE WHO'S COLLABORATING WITH THE ENEMY? FORGET IT, TRAITOR!
NO--THERE'S NO REASON TO FIGHT!
DAMMIT! WILL YOU PLEASE STOP AND LISTEN?!
XILL HAS DISABLED THE MOTOR FUNCTIONS OF HIS COMRADE. THE PILOT IS IN NO DANGER.
I HAVE A PHASER LOCK ON ONE OF THE MECHANOIDS.
HOLD YOUR FIRE, MR. SULU.
THEY KILLED CHYENN!


NO--
WE KILLED HER!
BY NEVER QUESTIONING HER COMMAND.
I KILLED HER BY NOT TELLING HER SHE WAS WRONG.
I SWEAR ON THE HAARKON CREST THAT I WILL NOT LET THAT HAPPEN AGAIN.
I WILL SOONER DISABLE ANY ONE OF YOU THAN LET YOU ENDANGER YOURSELVES OR THIS SQUAD.
BY RIGHT OF ASCENSION, I AM NOW HAARKOS ALPHA..AND AS MY FIRST OFFICIAL ACT--
--I SURRENDER TO THE ENTERPRISE.

FORCE FIELDS ARE MAINTAINING CONTROL OF HULL BREECH.
HE'S A GOOD KID.
CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 5268.8. THANKS IN LARGE PART TO THE EFFORTS OF REPRESENTATIVE MELKOR AND XILL KOFZA, THE LOWARIANS AND THE HAARKOS HAVE AGREED ON TERMS OF REPARATION.
THE HAARKOS, CLOSELY SUPERVISED BY LOWARIAN OFFICIALS, WILL ACT AS LOWARIA'S SECURITY AND RESCUE FORCE, WHILE LOWARIA ADMINISTERS AND MAINTAINS THE MECHS.
IN ADDITION EACH OF THE HAARKOS WILL BE ASSIGNED TO LIVE WITH A LOWARIAN FAMILY AND ATTEND LOWARIAN SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO INTEGRATE THE PILOTS INTO THE SOCIETY THEY'RE NOW PROTECTING
THOUGH SOME OF THE PILOTS MAY SEE THIS AS A PUNISHMENT, I BELIEVE THEY COULDN'T RECEIVE A BETTER GIFT.


REPAIRS COMPLETE, SIR. HULL INTEGRITY'S AT 100% AND THE MAIN VIEWER'S GOOD AS NEW!
I'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO YOU, JIM, I NEVER KNEW YOU HAD SUCH PARENTAL INSTINCTS. EVER THOUGHT OF BECOMING A DAD FOR REAL?
ONCE...
WARP SPEED, HELMSMAN.